The Libyan War 1911-1912

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Edited by

Luca Micheletta and Andrea Ungari

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INTRODUCTION

The essays presented in this volume aim to offer the reader the opportunity to reflect, one hundred years later, on a fundamental moment in the history of Italy and Italian foreign policy: the war for the conquest of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. It was a war that came after a long period, almost 45 years, in which Italy had not been involved in a conflict with another European state. After achieving the Unification of Italy in 1861, the Italians had fought a last 'European' war in 1866 against Austria-Hungary. The aim then had been to unite the Veneto to the Italian national state and to begin the completion of national unification with annexation of the territories inhabited by Italians still living under foreign rule. In 1911 Italians again took up arms against a European state, the Ottoman Empire, but with completely different objectives from those of national unification.

New aspirations, new patterns of thought, new myths had meanwhile emerged within Italian society with inevitable repercussions on its political system. It was, by then, a modern mass society that produced new forms of social aggregation and new political forces already able to strongly influence public opinion and the government, and ready to challenge the political hegemony of the liberal ruling class. The Libyan war showed, in every respect, just how far Italian society's values and ambitions had matured, but also their limitations and their contradictions. It would not be inaccurate to say that the Libyan conflict was in many ways a dress rehearsal for the First World War; at the political, propaganda and military levels. The 'education of the masses', the manipulation of public opinion by launching extensive propaganda campaigns in support of, or against the war now fully entered the picture as goals of political action; military technology developed, while the use of planes and bombing was tried out for the first time.

Italian foreign policy pursued the goal of extending its influence over Tripolitania and Cyrenaica for thirty years, independently of the governments and personalities that alternately led the country. Like the goal of completing the process of national unification, which was also pursued blindly from 1861 to the First World War, so control of the 'fourth shore' became one of the main leitmotifs of Italian diplomacy. So it was a design that ran parallel to that of the completion of national

unification and it was imposed initially for reasons quite different from those behind the expansion into east Africa.

The belief that it was essential to control a slice of the African coast on the Mediterranean grew, in the 1880s, among a small group of political leaders and diplomats based on the idea of the "Mediterranean balance of power", as it was then termed, with the other great European powers, but it spread gradually, over a period of thirty years to public opinion and to political actors, feeding on new and, at least in appearance, powerful motivations. The creation of a vast colonial empire as a requirement for the "status" of great power or as an outlet for emigration, or even as a panacea for all the ills of Italy, was added to the need to maintain the Mediterranean balance of power, in a crescendo of rhetoric and propaganda orchestrated around the myth of the "Grande Italia" or the "Grande proletaria".

In fact, the propaganda campaign for the occupation of Libya, even more than the military operations, had an important impact on the Italian political system, testing its stability and animating a violent debate between the parties but also inside the parties themselves. So, if on the one hand the Catholic movement, with its clear support for the occupation of African territory, drew significantly closer to the political objectives of the liberal ruling class, bridging the gap that had been created in the aftermath of the annexation of Rome and the creation of a unified Italian state, the socialist movement was not able to take a united position and ended up split between the interventionists and those who were against an imperialist conflict. These were positions that would soon reappear, albeit with different nuances, when the country was faced with the question of taking part in the Great War.

If this was the position of the Catholics and Socialists, the liberal politicians faced the Libyan enterprise initially with some hesitancy, a hesitation motivated essentially by the memories of the military failures in Africa that had characterized colonial expansionism under Crispi. Giolitti, however, both for well-known reasons of international politics, and also because of pressure from domestic propaganda, took action. A key role in determining the government's decision was played by the nationalist movement, the most recently formed political organization and one already determined to play an active role in the Italian political system. This movement, in fact, led a press campaign imbued with rhetoric and memories of the Roman Empire's domination of Africa, using slogans and literary themes that it would use again in the campaign for intervention in World War I and that would later characterize the propaganda of fascist ideology.

From the international point of view, it is well known that the support for Libya being in Italy's sphere of influence, which was gained from all the major European powers through thirty years of negotiations and agreements, never turned into support for war. Neither the allies of the Triple Alliance, nor the friends of the future Triple Entente looked favorably upon an initiative that endangered the international order, reopened the question of the future of the Ottoman Empire and posed the risk of a general conflict. But the European international system had become too unstable to find a common line of action to prevent the war. Unable to prevent it, the European powers were resigned to trying to end it as quickly as possible. What put an end to the war in Libya, however, was the great Balkan conflict which opened in 1912, another war even more dangerous and uncertain for the delicate balance of power in Europe, the conclusion of which in fact opened the way for the assassination in Sarajevo and to the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia in 1914.

The essays brought together here investigate some fundamental aspects of the history of the war in Libya, without taking any predetermined position. The editors have invited the authors to reflect on the war, in the light of new sources and rereading the sources with the insight gained from the passage of a hundred years. It is a reflection that comes as part of the attempt, led by many Italian historiographers, to recover the historical memory of Italian colonialism and which has seen, in recent years, a rapid growth in studies that have sought to bring to light the role played by "deep forces" and by the governments, but also the impact that the colonial experience in general had on Italian society. In this context, this book aims to illustrate the salient features of a major event in Italian and European history, an episode that had profound repercussions for Italian politics in the following decades and contributed to ending the Belle Époque, raising in the minds of both the Italian and European public the specter of a new war in Europe.

Luca Micheletta
Andrea Ungari

CHAPTER I

THE ITALIAN LIBERALS AND THE ITALO-TURKISH WAR

SANDRO ROGARI[1]

In his *Memoirs* Giolitti writes:

> The existing state of things could not last; given the conduct of the Young Turks, had we not gone to Libya, some other power politically involved or with economic interests there would certainly have done so. Italy, however, so profoundly moved by the French occupation of Tunis, would never have tolerated the repetition of an event of that nature in Libya; and thus we would not have run the risk of war with some European power, an event immeasurably more serious than a conflict with Turkey.[2]

These few words refer to a number of factors influencing Giolitti's decision to go to war, a decision taken on September 14 and approved by the king on September 17. 1911.[3] Firstly, Giolitti indirectly affirms that Austria and Germany's interests were multiplying in Libya partly due to the fact that the Young Turks considered them favourably. Francesco Guicciardini, traditionally moderate and prudent on the Libyan issue, had explicitly said as much in the Chamber on June 7. 1911 during the debate on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' budget. [4] Furthermore, the whole Moroccan issue that had reopened the French-German question tended to strengthen this view of German expansion in the region. Nor should the

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[1] University of Florence.

[2] G. GIOLITTI, *Memorie della mia vita*, Garzanti, Milan, 1982, p. 217.

[3] A. DEL BOCA, *Gli italiani in Libia. Tripoli bel suol d'amore 1860-1922*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1986, p. 65.

[4] Parliamentary Acts, Chamber of Deputies, *Discussioni*, June 7 1911, p. 15349. Later in his *Memoirs*, Giolitti also states the Turkish government was negotiating with Austria and Germany to obtain some compensation for the 4.5% rise in customs duty.

second reason for the initiative raised by Giolitti be underestimated, connected with the still-vivid memory of the defeat at Adua of only fifteen years before. In political terms the most concise yet forceful term justifying war was used by Giolitti at the Turin Regio Theatre on October 7. 1911 when war had just broken out: "historical fatality",[5] he said.

If we accept the "fatality" thesis as the historical context seems to indicate, then we have to enquire if, in the prospect of Giolitti's policy, this "fatality" was accepted willingly, that is, if it was perceived to clash with his planned policy. Judging from the facts, the government's programme presented by Giolitti to the Chamber in April 1911 was, in the half-century of history since unification, the one farthest to the left and was structured in a three-point policy to consolidate the axis with the socialist left: universal vote for men, an allowance for deputies to enable even the less well-off to become candidates and undertake parliamentary activity, and the monopoly of life insurance to create funds for old age and workers' disability.[6] For reasons I need not go into here, Giolitti did not manage to bring the Socialists into the government, although it is evident that his aim was to create a solid political understanding with the Left.

However, in his *Memoirs* Giolitti writes that "as soon as the ministry was formed, Di San Giuliano and I were in agreement that the occupation of Libya was a question to be kept under consideration"[7] and he adds that within the government the prudence of the prime minister contrasted with the haste of the foreign minister, a point shared by Italian ambassador Tittoni in Paris. The prime minister feared an outbreak of hostilities in Europe over the Moroccan issue and was therefore concerned that, should that happen, Italy would be involved in the Libyan undertaking.[8] It seems that Giolitti is implying that, albeit with some differences of opinion, an undeclared point in the government programme was in fact the conquest of Libya. In this regard, it must not be forgotten that in the summer of 1911 Giolitti was adamant in not wanting to give rise to the impression that he had been forced to embark on the undertaking by nationalistic pressure; nor did he want anything written in his *Memoirs* to endorse such a theory. He had every interest, therefore, in backdating the planning of the undertaking – or, better, in making it appear backdated.

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[5] G. PERTICONE, *L'Italia in Africa. La politica coloniale dell'Italia negli atti, documenti e discussioni parlamentari*, Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, Rome, 1965, p. 86. See also S. ROMANO, *La quarta sponda*, Longanesi, Milan, 2005, p. 48.

[6] S. ROGARI, *Alle origini del trasformismo. Partiti e sistema politico nell'Italia liberale*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1998, p. 199.

[7] G. GIOLITTI, *op. cit*., p. 217.

[8] IBID., pp.218-219.

It is, however, a fact that in April 1911 when the government was installed, the question was becoming pressing after lying low for so long. Meanwhile, on March 1. 1911 the first number of *L'Idea Nazionale* appeared; the date was a coincidence, being the anniversary of the Adua defeat.[9] Moreover, it was during those very days that Enrico Corradini, back from his trip to Libya, published *L'ora di Tripoli*, supporting the theory that war would strengthen Italy, one reason being that Libya was a fertile country.[10] This point was supposed to counteract the arguments and theories, increasingly submerged by the growing pro-intervention in Libya clamour, that dared to query the economic advantage of the undertaking. Again, in the parliamentary debate referred to above in which Guicciardini took part, the Orientalist Leone Cattani had dared to say that Libya "is one of the poorest countries in the world," adding that his colleagues in the Chamber had no idea of what the "African desert" was like.[11] Luigi Einaudi and Edoardo Giretti used similar arguments in the *Giornale degli economisti*, with no significant impact on pro-intervention enthusiasm.

In fact this was an old story; in the past it would have been handled with greater restraint. After the Tunis humiliation, the subject of the Italian presence in the Mediterranean surfaced from time to time, frequently together with that of our expansion in the Red Sea area. It came up, for instance, in 1885, at the time of the Berlin Congress called by Bismarck for the purpose of settling colonial issues according to a logic of portioning out and balancing, especially in favour of France, since Germany was very interested in distracting the latter from European interests.[12] After foreign minister Mancini had spoken during the debate in Parliament, De Renzis, Di Camporeale and Oliva took the floor in favour of Italy's presence in the Mediterranean. Sonnino had even attacked Mancini for refusing to intervene with Great Britain in Egypt.[13] Bovio had also taken part in the debate, using the typical pedagogical argument shared by the Left, that Italy fulfilled a civilising mission against barbarity in the Mediterranean.[14] In 1888 Ferdinando Martini, future governor of Eritrea from 1897 to 1907, criticised in anti-Crispi tones the obstinacy of making an issue of the Italian presence in the Red Sea.[15] Also, the January

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[9] A. DEL BOCA, *op. cit*., p. 58.
[10] S. ROMANO, *op. cit*., p. 32.
[11] A. DEL BOCA, *op. cit*., p. 60.
[12] Cfr., S. ROGARI, *L'età della globalizzazione. Storia del mondo nell'età contemporanea*, UTET, Turin, 1997, pp. 132 et seq.
[13] G. PERTICONE, *op. cit.*, cit., pp. 106-107.
[14] IBID., p. 106.
[15] IBID., p. 79.

1901 correspondence between Visconti Venosta and the French ambassador in Rome Barrère clearly showed Italy's aspirations to feel assured that the Anglo-French agreement of 1899 on Mediterranean issues should not harm Italian interests in Tripolitania. From then on the possibility of French support for the Italian conquest was on the cards, should France obtain Morocco.[16] This exchange was consolidated in June 1902 by the agreement of reciprocal Franco-Italian neutrality undersigned by Prinetti, foreign minister in the Zanardelli government, and by Barrère himself. This French approach followed in the aftermath of the Fashoda Crisis with Great Britain and the realisation that the latter had no interest in the Mediterranean. Liberal political circles and public opinion thereafter were convinced that Cirenaica and Tripolitania were territories where the Italian presence was favoured, particularly in terms of emigration and a pre-eminent economic interest, without this implying a military occupation. On May 10 1905 in the Chamber, Tittoni declared that Italy should not occupy Tripoli "until circumstances make it absolutely unavoidable". In any case, he added:

> In Tripolitania Italy has found the factor that determines the balance of power in the Mediterranean, and we would never allow this balance to be upset to our disadvantage.[17]

This expectation of economic control without resorting to the use of military force, however, was not fulfilled. The Hon. De Martino, ex general secretary at the Foreign Ministry, even then found it necessary to explain that the Ottoman Empire opposed Italian emigration. The clash between pro-interventionists and anti-interventionists on this subject continued throughout the first ten years of the century. The former, such as De Marinis, claimed the lands in the sun for Italian emigration. The latter, such as Lollini in the wake of De Viti de Marco, denied that Libya could be the Promised Land for Italian agricultural workers and also that the conquest would be easy.[18] However, during the parliamentary session on May 14. 1904, Guicciardini himself admitted that no further steps ahead had been made in Libya, while France, from Tunis and Algeria, was expanding into the hinterland, seizing the caravan routes and building the Djibouti-Addis AbAba railroad.[19]

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[16] S. ROGARI, *L'età della globalizzazione*, cit. p. 140.
[17] G. PERTICONE, *op. cit.*, cit., p. 115.
[18] IBID.
[19] IBID., p. 85.

In May 1905, prime minister Fortis spoke of the right to economic and commercial occupation, but Di San Giuliano responded in the Senate on June 14. 1905 that peaceful penetration had been proclaimed but not put into practice.[20] Debate had continued therefore at length without achieving practical results and with Giolitti's entourage almost totally uninterested in dealing with the question in detail. On the other hand, this policy of effectively abstaining from any commitment on behalf of Italian interests in Libya had led both to the French expansion into the hinterland and – after the Algeciras conference in March-April 1906[21] that brought the first Moroccan crisis to a close – to the growing economic and commercial presence of Germany within the Ottoman Empire territory, including Libya.

Germany had even tried to bring the Sublime Porte into the Triple Alliance as an anti-Russian move. Had the operation been successful, it would obviously have prevented at the outset any chance of Italian military intervention in the area. According to Giolitti in his *Memoirs*, this German interest and Berlin's consequent hostility towards Italy's military intervention account for the timely decree on November 4. 1911 in which the Italian government claimed Italian sovereignty over Tripolitania and Cirenaica,[22] well before control over the territory had been effectively achieved. This step was criticised by the Socialists who considered it ill-timed and premature, but Giolitti intended it as a measure to block Berlin's diplomatic move, although this could not be officially declared.

To return to the point, therefore, and given that throughout 1910 the issue had not yet aroused any particular interest in public opinion and the political world, the whole question became the subject of attention when Giolitti returned to power. By March, when the Luzzatti government went into crisis over the extension of the franchise, the nationalist Right had become convinced that Giolitti was steering towards the Left in an attempt to consolidate relations with the Socialist Party, perhaps by including it in the government majority or even within the government itself. Furthermore, the nationalist movement had formed itself into an Association in the Florence meeting of December 1910 and therefore had a visibility issue, at least in its political position, albeit remaining for the time being within the area of the liberal Right.[23]

The subject of any potential harm to Italian interests in Cirenaica and Tripolitania was therefore taken up and used mainly for reasons of internal

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[20] IBID., p. 116.
[21] S. ROGARI, *L'età della globalizzazione*, cit. p. 139.
[22] G. GIOLITTI, *op. cit.*, p. 244.
[23] S. ROGARI, *Alle origini del trasformismo*, cit., p. 206 et seq.

political dynamics well before the official outbreak of the new Morocco crisis which exploded between the French occupation in May and the appearance of the *Panther* in Agadir Bay at the beginning of July. Furthermore, 1911 was the fiftieth anniversary of national unity, a fact which encouraged a wide use of rhetoric, national as well as nationalist, in which the conquest of Libya was to become a kind of unavoidable corollary.

This leads me to believe that well before the Mediterranean crisis forced Giolitti to intervene, there was an attempt on the Right to bring forward a question that would cause difficulty for Giolitti's political strategy and divide liberal opinion. The nationalists were partially successful, since a new liberal Right appeared in the Chamber in June 1911.[24] Giolitti's reaction, in some ways inevitable, was to consolidate a political class that would otherwise have fallen apart. Guglielmo Ferrero may have exaggerated somewhat in affirming, after the Second World War, that

> Giolitti realized that his power was in the balance and went to war to save it. He extinguished the immense jet of flames that threatened to destroy his system by dousing it with sand from the Marmarica desert[25]

but it contains some truth. The problem was that to put out the fire and, without resorting to metaphor, to set the fractures within the liberal world which still included the nationalists, Giolitti was forced to steer towards a collision with the Socialists. The reform wing of the Socialist Party found itself in ever greater difficulty; the point of no return was the 1912 Socialist Congress in Reggio Emilia when the reforming Right under Bissolati was expelled.[26] In brief, Giolitti was successful in achieving two crucial points in the government programme, INA (the National Insurance Institute) and universal franchise for men, these being a bridge towards the Left, but if the intention of the nationalists and the liberal Right were to cause a crisis in his political strategy, then this objective was achieved.

However, I am not convinced that "Giolitti did not perceive to what extent that military operation would influence the whole political construction that had so far sustained his power system" as has been

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[24] IBID., p. 208.

[25] G. FERRERO, *Potere*, Milan, 1947, p. 238. Cfr. F. MALGERI, *L'impresa di Libia e la crisi degli equilibri giolittiani*, in *Il Parlamento italiano*, vol. VIII, *Da Giolitti a Salandra. La Libia e l'intervento*, Nuova Cei, Milan, 1990.

[26] F. MANZOTTI, *Il socialismo riformista in Italia*, Florence, Le Monnier, 1965, p. 16 et seq.

affirmed.[27] Giolitti was indeed fully aware of the possible outcome, and that explains his annoyance regarding the Libyan campaign that the nationalists had triggered in March.[28] He had not, perhaps, foreseen the aftermath, above all the aftermath of the 1913 universal franchise which laid the foundations for his departure from power. He intended his absence to be brief, but the outbreak of the First World War and the events connected to Italy's entry into war made it definitive. Giolitti was quite convinced of being able to retrieve support from the Left. This is shown by the determination with which he went ahead both with the law introducing universal franchise and with the creation of the INA, something that damaged the powerful interests involved with its prospect of a monopoly on life insurance. It was no coincidence that he feared the outburst of the crisis and that European war would upset not only the international situation but also the domestic scenario, preventing a political recovery of the Left.

He was so very much aware of all this that he even calculated the time necessary for the conquest of Cirenaica and Tripolitania in order to diminish the risk of war in the Balkans, lands where winter warfare is prohibitive. Here again, he was proved wrong. The conquest was more difficult than foreseen. The resistance of the five thousand Turks against the 1,732 Italian soldiers who landed in Tripoli on October 5 was stronger than had been estimated. In order to gain time and terminate operations quickly, Italy began to seek military diversions and came up against the hostility of Austria. It was only after the meeting between Victor Emmanuel II and the German emperor on March 25. 1912 that Italy obtained consent to its intervention in the Dodecanese in order to crush Turkish resistance. This happened in May 1912 and produced the desired effect; under the mediation of Volpi peace talks opened that finished on October 18 with the Peace treaty of Ouchy. Unfortunately, and contrary to Giolitti's intentions, it was too late. Eighteen days previously the first Balkan war had started, and it was due to Austria's dissatisfaction with the solution of these wars that the First World War broke out.

To sum up without invading the topics of other papers, it is certain that: Giolitti did not seek war but was forced into it; it was an outcome he did not want for the very reason that he had clearly foreseen that a colonial war would end the understanding with the Socialist Party and upset the political equilibrium holding it together. However mistakenly, he was convinced that what he was forced into doing would not hinder him from

[27] F. MALGERI, *op. cit*.
[28] S. ROMANO, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

recuperating suspended political alignments as long as the colonial war terminated rapidly without destabilising any equilibrium in Europe.

If we accept this theory, we still have to explain why Giolitti considered the war inevitable. I recall that it was declared with an ultimatum to Turkey on September 28. 1911. Giolitti himself sums up the international motivations in the passage of his *Memoirs* that I have placed at the beginning of this paper. If Italy had not gone into Libya, another power would have done so; and I may add that, had this happened, the relatively recent memory of Adua would in any case have led to the government being overthrown. Domestic motivations, although closely linked to the international reasons above, are inherent to the liberal world. Unlike the Sonnino's Right, which in any case seemed isolated, liberal opinion had remained cool and distant from the whole question until spring 1911, when it became rapidly excited and was overwhelmed by a collective passion that gave voice to the positions of the Right and revitalized them. This passage was well described by Salvemini:

> Italy was bored in 1911. It was disgusted by everything. The democratic parties had hit rock bottom in public contempt. The Hon. Giolitti was… the Hon. Giolitti. The Hon. Sonnino was like an abandoned railway wagon on a dead-end track. No man in sight to inspire confidence in a better future. Anything was better than such universal stagnation. This "anything" was presented by the daily papers as the conquest of the "promised land": an easy conquest, nice and cheap, enormously productive, absolutely essential to Italy. So up with the war! Very soon the papers were overwhelmed by their readers' hysterical impatience: whoever told the biggest stories sold the greatest number of copies; as a result of such stories going from strength to strength, halfway through September there was no stopping the madness. Therefore it became imperative for the government to decide on war straight away.[29]

Even taking into account Salvemini's intense dislike of Giolitti and therefore his colourful use of language, his picture of the general atmosphere seems to me to be correct. Luigi Albertini also acknowledged as much, in his *Vent'anni di vita politica italiana*, when he wrote in reference to the *Corriere della Sera* of which he was editor, that "we used … rhetoric, as did all the most important newspapers".[30]

[29] A. DEL BOCA, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
[30] V. CASTRONOVO, *La stampa dall'unità al fascismo*, Rome Bari, Laterza, 1973, p. 190.

However, although this was true as of the second half of September 1911, the *Corriere* was slower and later in taking the road to war. Ojetti stated clearly to Albertini on September 5:

> I take the liberty of telling you that the silence of the *Corriere della Sera* terrifies me while the *Stampa* and the *Giornale d'Italia*, for example, are stoking up the boilers of public opinion for an immediate start.[31]

Ojetti spoke from his anti-war position, but it is a good description of the *Corriere*'s cautious policy in favour of the right yet different from that of the Sonnino and Salandra groups. His hope was the *Corriere* would deal with the issue and raise its voice against the initiative. This was unrealistic, although illustrious contributors to the Milan daily paper such as Luigi Einaudi and Gaetano Mosca, writing in the *Tribuna* which favoured Giolitti, had expressed all their concern. Andrea Torre, the foreign policy commentator voicing the interventionist line of the *Corriere*, had written to Albertini on August 24 before Ojetti, with an opposing viewpoint on the principle that intervention was inevitable if Italy did not want to lose her role as a European Mediterranean power. "I have studied the question from every angle," he wrote, "and I am utterly convinced that a passive attitude on the part of Italy would be an enormous disaster: I am not exaggerating. Italy would turn into a seaside Switzerland…".[32]

On September 15 his newspaper was still sitting on the fence, the one voice out of line with almost all the others, but Albertini was probably convinced by what Torre wrote: "Giolitti is sniffing the wind; he has decided to go, but if he can find a reason for not going, he won't go. The Socialists' threats scare him! Poor Italy!".[33] Moreover, Albertini's paper had a strong adversary in the Milan area: the *Secol*o, which was, and was to remain, the only voice lifted against a colonial war, for reasons that were strictly political: as Pio Schinetti wrote, the death of the "long-awaited democratic policy".[34] There was the risk of appearing in the long run to be associated with such positions which, however, the *Corriere* opposed.

A fair interpretation of the *Corriere della Sera*'s caution, therefore, must make sense of this set of motivations: to avoid taking positions that in any way went against the paper's anti-Giolitti policy; to avoid running

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[31] L. ALBERTINI, *Epistolario*, edited by O. BARIÉ, I, *Dalla guerra di Libia alla grande guerra*, Mondadori, Milano, 1968, p. 8.
[32] IBID., p. 7.
[33] IBID., p. 11.
[34] A. DEL BOCA, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

the risk of siding with Giolitti and then having to back down when the latter's position became clearly defined; to take into account the fact that important contributors to the *Corriere* were against the war; but also hold in mind that anti-colonialism would push the Milan daily into line with the *Secolo* whose policy the *Corriere* opposed and whose circulation the *Corriere* had to outdo as the most important national daily for the progressive middle class. On the horns of this dilemma, Albertini came out in support of the war but distanced himself from Giolitti whose handling of it he criticised. This was the line taken by Luigi Barzini in his articles from Tripoli, well summed up in Albertini's letter of November 4: "Giolitti is taking little care of the soldiers and great care of the Socialists.[35] All in all, Giolitti continued to be under attack for his negotiations with the Socialist Left since he could not be toppled by the one argument that would have led to his political downfall: his failure to launch the conquest. As to policy towards the Socialists, the results were clear: the break had taken place and nothing could be done about it, at least for the time being.

However, if this was the slow, careful approach of Albertini's *Corriere* towards a position supporting the war of colonial conquest, the other liberal daily papers were already up and running. Frassati's *La Stampa*, traditionally aligned with Giolitti and under pressure on the right from the *Gazzetta del Popolo* in Piedmont, had since July been publishing correspondence from the nationalist Bevione, beginning with an open letter to the prime minister.

> For a strategy such as yours has a limit and a term. The limit comes when repugnance towards dealing with an external question, however much it should ensure peace, may bring about greater damage than facing it with decision. The term appears when the increase in production and savings, high standards of living, peace, freedom and the definitive achievement of domestic order, have made the country aware of stimuli coming from international life and therefore intolerant of unfair humiliations previously borne with a sigh; it is undergoing the need for expansion that is inseparable from any living, vital organism.[36]

It has been suggested that the open letter was no more than a two-way game between Giolitti and Frassati and that the latter used Bevione's letter to accompany and justify a decision already taken by Giolitti. In my

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[35] L. ALBERTINI, *Epistolario*, edited by O. BARIÉ, I, cit., p. 25.

[36] Bevione's open letter was published in the *Stampa* on July 30-31 1911. I quote from E. DECLEVA, *L'Italia e la politica internazionale dal 1870 al 1914. L'ultima fra le grandi potenze*, Mursia, Milan, 1975, pp. 136-137.

opinion this theory is unfounded, for two reasons. Firstly, because in July Giolitti had not yet taken the decision; he decided only after the Morocco issue was solved, when he began to fear that France felt herself to be freed from the commitments undertaken with Italy in 1902. Secondly, because Bevione's arguments are typically nationalist: the state of internal peace achieved imposes external expansion on the whole nation. Neither Giolitti nor Frassati would have been willing to undersign such theories themselves. But rather than these arguments, for the Italian publishing companies the principle held that if they wished to increase circulation, then they had to ride the pro-intervention wave. Not to do so would have been suicidal since circulation had been falling for some time. We must suppose the reader and above all the purchaser of the great opinion-leading dailies to be reasonably well educated and part of that bourgeoisie then considering itself the guardian of national values as well as part of the country's managerial class, and, of course, male; this reader/purchaser was particularly sensitive to the issue. The newspapers therefore played up the issue and rode the wave of editorial success.

Any interpretation of the contrast between internal and foreign policies in the pro-Giolitti newspapers, particularly *La Stampa* and *La Tribuna*, as reflecting the line of government policy would be misleading. The disparity was among the approaches of the publishing businesses[37] cited, due also to the commercial interests mentioned. At this distance in time it may seem, but is not, paradoxical that the newspapers in the Giolitti area should make use of foreign policy commentators or war correspondents who were nationalist. It is no surprise that someone like Federzoni should be in charge of articles for the *Giornale d'Italia* while it may seem strange that Olindo Malagodi's *La Tribuna* employed the nationalist Francesco Coppola[38]. The rest of the important press was aligned: from the *Mattino* to the *Corriere d'Italia*, from the *Messaggero* to the *Resto del Carlino*, from the *Giornale di Sicilia* to the *Gazzetta di Venezia.*[39] The apparent paradox is explained by two factors: the nationalists were as yet still part of the liberal world and were not seen as opposing it, and the "policy" of the newspapers close to the liberal side should not be read through spectacles tinted by the conviction that editorial policy and interests were dictated from above.

Giolitti succeeded through war in removing arguments from the liberal Right while guaranteeing his government's survival, and in setting in

[37] For the disparity between foreign policy and domestic policy of *La Stampa* cf. E. DECLEVA, *op. cit*., p. 135.
[38] V. CASTRONOVO, *La stampa dall'unità al fascismo*, cit., p. 194.
[39] IBID., p. 193.

motion an appeasement policy with the Socialist Left for renewed collaboration, although this proved impossible after the split of Reggio Emilia in July 1912.[40] Nothing remained for the liberal Right but to attack Giolitti for his single-handed management of the war. And in fact the prime minister sent the ultimatum to the Grand Vizier at 2.30 p.m. on September 28th, and he did it when parliament was closed. He used Art. 10 of the law dated July 17. 1910 to finance the war; this law authorised the opening of credit in favour of the war minister on the proposal of the treasury minister following a decision by the Cabinet of Ministers.[41] With the Royal Decree of November 25. 1911 he declared the annexation of Libya without consulting parliament. His reasons are known: European diplomacy, particularly the allies of the Triple Alliance, were scheming to find a compromise solution to the detriment of Italy. The decree of annexation placed them in front of an irreversible *fait accompli*.

It was only on February 22. 1912 that Giolitti asked the Chamber to ratify it, after a close-knit parliamentary commission had been set up containing both the liberal Right and the radical Left as well as Giolitti supporters, under the chairmanship of Ferdinando Martini as spokesman.[42] In the debate, Martini had spoken of the unavoidability of the war due to Italy's need to "defend political and economic interests, safeguard her own position as a Mediterranean power" .[43] However, prior to the report accompanying the decree he had written that:

> We would have incurred serious responsibility towards our country and the whole of Europe, we would have exposed Italy's future and European peace to serious dangers, had we allowed the continuation of a situation that harmed our dignity and our vital interests, a situation so fraught as to present no other solution than a war, and had we not taken into account the danger that this might break out at a moment which would have entailed serious and dangerous international repercussions.[44]

Sonnino had little else to say except to accuse Giolitti of having violated the Statute in declaring war without involving parliament and

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[40] F. MANZOTTI, *op. cit.*, p. 19 et seq.
[41] G. PERTICONE, *op. cit.*, p. 87.
[42] Giolitti had had the foresight to appoint the following commission: Alessio, Baccelli, Barzilai, Bertolini, Bettolo, Boselli, Carcano, Cocco Ortu, Daneo, Ferri, Fusinato, Guicciardini, Lacava, Luzzatti, Luzzatto, Orlando, Pantano, Rocchetti, Salandra and Sonnino. Cfr., G. PERTICONE, *op. cit*., pp. 117-118.
[43] Parliamentary Acts, Chamber of Deputies, *Discussioni*, February 25 1912, p. 17144
[44] G. PERTICONE, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

without asking for financing for the initiative.[45] The argument was weak given the July 17. 1910 law mentioned above, and more so in consideration of the fact that Sonnino was in favour of the initiative, while reserving his right to "any examination and decision regarding the methods and single acts of the Ministry, and whoever acts for the Ministry, in the diplomatic and military management of the campaign".

Bissolati gave his support, adopting the argument that should another power occupy those lands Italy "could not have been peacefully sustained by Italy". The reasoning behind the defence of "supreme interests",[46] which his colleagues in the party did not accept – for the time being – had even become part of reformist language. Gaetano Mosca, overcoming his former doubts, said "united and compact, the people of Italy stand behind the Government":[47] a well-founded consideration, at least if we understand "people" as meaning liberal and catholic public opinion. Giolitti's dilemma was to find the right arguments to respond to his critics by calling upon reasonableness and keeping a hand outstretched in welcome. He therefore declared he had:

> entered the undertaking not through enthusiasm but only through reason … When I considered every aspect of the problem, if we wished to avoid very serious, very short-term trouble, I decided and I acted with energy as if I had been convinced right from the start.[48]

This was not enough to restore calm, yet he tried in the hope of better things. Better things never came about, and we have seen why: because the split among the Socialists was irremediable and was worsened by the "ministerialisation" of Bissolati and his group; because in February 1912 the war was anything but over – the right military solutions were still being sought to bring it to a conclusion; because in the autumn of 1912 the first Balkan War was to break out: and the European war was an outcome of the Balkan wars. But at that time it appeared that the issue could be brought to a successful conclusion. The Carcano agenda was approved with 431 votes in favour, 38 against and 1 abstention. In the end only the Socialists opposed it.[49] In the Senate, where there were no Socialists, the

[45] IBID., p. 91.
[46] IBID., p. 92.
[47] IBID., p. 91.
[48] IBID., p. 93.
[49] For the whole question of the Socialists and the War in Liby see M. DEGL'INNOCENTI, *Il socialismo italiano e la guerra di Libia*, Editori Riuniti, Rome, 1976

Torrigiani agenda passed unanimously.[50] Had the demiurge performed a new miracle? He had succeeded in bringing everyone together and consolidating his own majority. Apparently he had. Yet only apparently. The divisions even within the liberal world alone were serious even though the liberal Right's attempt to topple Giolitti had failed. It was only a Fellini-style "orchestra rehearsal". When the repeat performance arrived, in the summer of 1914, the liberal Right under Salandra and Sonnino was to call in the account left in abeyance since 1912. And the Giolitti system would be overturned together with the "parecchio" doctrine.[51]

[50] G. PERTICONE, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

[51] NdT: This refers to Giolitti having reportedly stated that neutrality would achieve "parecchio", i.e. a good deal.

CHAPTER II

THE ROLE OF THE ITALIAN MONARCHY IN THE WAR IN LIBYA

ANDREA UNGARI[1]

Introduction

The analysis of the monarchy's role within the Italian political system is undoubtedly complex owing to the powers assigned to the institution of royalty and its representative by the Albertine Statute, the charter granted by Carlo Alberto in March 1848. Impelled by international and national events, the king of Sardinia decided to grant a Charter modelled on those of France, 1820, and Belgium, 1831; a charter which would guarantee the powers of the Monarchy on the one hand, and, on the other, ratify the new "liberal" course of the reign. Given the "concessionary" nature of the Statute that derived from a sort of pact between the Savoy monarchy and the national bourgeois class, it was naturally unlikely that relations between the monarchy and the political system would comply with the theoretical dictates of nineteenth-century European constitutionalism.

The picture given by Adolphe Thiers of the "king who reigns but does not rule", a *super partes* organ to preside over national life and safeguard its ultimate values and interests, was valid as mentioned above only from the theoretical point of view:[2] in a nineteenth-century European scenario of many "crowned heads", there was a constant, lively interchange between the monarchy and the political system to define the bounds of the reciprocal spheres of influence and – in particular – of reciprocal powers.[3]

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[1] Guglielmo Marconi and Luiss Guido-Carli University, Rome.

[2] F. CAMMARANO, *Il 'garante interessato': monarchia e politica in Italia e Gran Bretagna dopo il 1848*, in *Sovrani a metà. Monarchia e legittimazione tra Otto e Novecento*, G. GUAZZALOCA (ed.), Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2009, pp. 70-1.

[3] "Among the many possible readings of the transformation of the monarchic institution after 1848, one of the most meaningful sees the sovereign, apart from

Italy came within this overall picture since the Statute granted the monarchy a central position within the system, assigning it wide powers in the executive, legislative and judiciary sectors. In the executive sector, indeed, royal power had been so confirmed that "there was no constitutional recognition of the prime minister who, quite simply, did not exist".[4]

Only with the evolution in the Sardinian political system and interaction between the monarchy and the liberal governing class did the constitutional procedure start by which the prime minister was to obtain the confidence of the Chambers in order to be appointed head of the government. Camillo Benso Count of Cavour was the moving spirit behind this procedure; thanks to his control over parliament and his successes in foreign policy, he emerged as a statesman of international level, well able to limit the interference of Victor Emmanuel II. Due to the flexibility of the Albertine Statute, however, this procedure was never codified in the constitution; therefore the constraints placed on royal powers regarding intervention in domestic policy and, in particular, the appointment of prime ministers depended on the interaction between the institution and the political system. In fact in relations between the monarchy and the liberal political class, the general concept was that in a strong political system able to indicate prime ministers with a certain degree of power and charisma, the monarchy's role was in fact compressed; while, should the political system be in crisis and unable to indicate an adequate prime minister, the Crown's power of intervention regained importance in indicating the head of government. Such effective intrusion, however, should not be held to imply a negative attitude to the liberal regime that arose in Italy as of 1861. Unlike other older monarchies such as the Hapsburgs or the Tsars and more recent monarchies such as the "warrior" Hohenzollerns, not only did the country stay within the sphere of liberalism but there were not so many differences even compared to the constitutional English regime. As Cammarano recalled

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the degree of apparent 'neutralization' of the role, not only as politically active … but also, if not above all, as a vigilant 'protagonist' in regaining the prerogatives delegated to other powers according to constitutional pacts. … The story of European constitutional monarchy therefore points to a conflict, more or less repressed yet always latent, between the monarchic principle and the principle of parliamentary representation to which the political forces referred, constantly committed to defending or advancing uncertain, changeable boundaries of its own legitimacy.", IBID., pp. 67-68.

[4] C. FUSARO, *Il Presidente della Repubblica. Il tutore di cui non riusciamo a fare a meno*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2003, p. 44.

> beyond appearances and the tribute to the spirit of the times, not only did Victoria and Umberto, as we have seen, never have any real intention of coming to terms with democratic demands, but they also showed a decided inclination to hinder the most consistent elements of liberalism, those least interested in carrying forward power policies.[5]

Although the monarchy's power to intervene in the appointment of prime ministers was influenced both by Cavour's procedure and by monarchy-political system interaction, there were two issues on which royal power was never questioned: the control of the armed forces and the drawing up of foreign policy.

The Army and Foreign policy

The idea that the handling of these issues was the "game reserve" of the sovereign was evident to the people of the time. Looking through the works of Domenico Farini[6] or Alessandro Guiccioli,[7] it is absolutely clear that the Savoy sovereigns would brook no interference in these fields. The connection between the army and the Crown had always been solid; apart from the Savoys' desire to be known as a warrior dynasty, there were practical reasons justifying the link between the two institutions. As Paolo Colombo recalls,

> Crown and army are indispensable one to the other. The former guarantees a vital flow of financial resources, high status and political centre-stage to the latter; the latter is the essential instrument for the Crown in winning over the nation, ensuring public order, and is the primary means of socialization for the male population (and therefore for politically active citizens).[8]

The king's interference was not limited to the choice of the war and navy ministers, who were in any case career soldiers and "therefore bound by the oath of absolute loyalty to a monarch to whom they are also inferior in rank",[9] but it extended from the war and navy budgets to plans for army

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[5] F. CAMMARANO, *op. cit.*, p. 83.
[6] D. FARINI, *Diario di fine secolo*, vol. I-II, Bardi, Rome, 1961-62.
[7] A. GUICCIOLI, *Diario di un conservatore*, Edizioni del Borghese, Milan, 1973.
[8] P. COLOMBO, *Le prerogative militari e internazionali della monarchia costituzionale sabauda: alcuni spunti di riflessione*, in G. GUAZZALOCA (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 203.
[9] P. COLOMBO, *Il re d'Italia. Prerogative costituzionali e potere politico della corona (1848-1922)*, Franco Angeli, Milan, 1999, p. 312.

reform, from military regulations to the formation of military bodies. Although it is naturally true that the governing class frequently took little interest in military questions[10] thus favouring the king's actions, such actions had notable domestic repercussions. Giuseppe Zanardelli's failure to form a government after the fall of Giovanni Giolitti in 1893 was due more to his hopes of reducing military costs than to the appointment of Oreste Baratieri as war minister. Again, during the 1896 government led by the conservative Marquis Antonio Di Rudinì who was favoured by Umberto I, the Ricotti reform project to scale down the royal army was openly opposed by the Crown, so much so that Cesare Francesco Ricotti was forced to withdraw it.[11] The monarchy, therefore, always maintained not only its own right to make appointments, imposing military personnel at least until 1907-09, it also defended the army from any measure for its reducing, whether financially or structurally.

Although the monopoly on military matters remained a Crown prerogative, the Savoy monarchy's control was no less strong over foreign policy and the appointment of foreign ministers, career diplomats and senior government officials. Federico Chabod is right in saying that in this field royal control, especially at the stage immediately after unification, outweighed even military "issues". In fact,

> foreign policy remained in the hands of Piedmont diplomacy or came directly from the Piedmont school … In short, a state of things found in no other sector of the Italian administration, not even in the army however closely linked to the Savoy dynasty and traditions.[12]

Evidently Victor Emmanuel II had firm control over this caste of diplomats of Piedmont origin, almost all from the aristocracy. What is more, alongside government diplomacy and the foreign minister Emilio Visconti Venosta, the king had no hesitation in favouring an independent foreign policy, what might be called a parallel policy to that carried forward by the government; this feature marked the whole decade after unification. Committed to the completion of the Risorgimento process, including attaining Veneto and Rome, Victor Emmanuel II favoured a series of diplomatic-military initiatives which impacted strongly on

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[10] F. MAZZONIS, *La Monarchia e il Risorgimento*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2002, p. 115.

[11] "6 June 1896 – It seems that Ricotti will have to withdraw his military reform project after the king's intervention", A. GUICCIOLI, *op. cit.*, p. 220. Cfr., D. BARTOLI, *La fine della monarchia*, Mondadori, Milan, 1966, p. 33.

[12] F. CHABOD, *Storia della politica estera italiana dal 1870 al 1896*, Laterza, Bari, 1965, p. 594.

domestic policy. In fact, the rapid succession of governments in the years from 1861 to 1869 basically depended on the sovereign's desire to play an active part, particularly in foreign policy. As Luigi Salvatorelli recalled,

> after Cavour's death, Victor Emmanuel II's role in directing national policy, already decisive in the great minister's lifetime, became predominant, and it would not be much of an exaggeration to say that he was his own prime minister. This becomes apparent from the succession of ministries, both in consideration of their formation (Rattazzi, Menabrea), and their dismissal (Ricasoli in 1862, Minghetti in 1864, Ratazzi himself in 1867). But it was not only the turnover of ministries; the broad outline of their work, at least regarding the national issue, was generally laid down under the direct and constant participation of the king; and the latter, furthermore, occasionally made up his own policy unbeknown to his ministers.[13]

Although the king seemed to take a lower profile in elaborating foreign policy after 1870, this

> lesser role did not however mean lack of participation That was impossible for a man like Victor Emmanuel II [who] was always instinctively a soldier and the force behind diplomatic moves, at least in his own mind: he recruited the people he trusted and the advisers he preferred from among generals and diplomats, showing them an esteem and friendship that no minister, no parliamentarian, ever attained.[14]

Right from the constitution of the Reign of Italy, therefore, foreign policy was considered the exclusive prerogative of the Crown. This feature was not typical of Italy alone, of course, since all the European courts, including liberal England, reserved foreign policy decisions to a restricted circle of persons and in the end the sovereign's personal opinion was often decisive. We have to remember that Europe, France excepted, was governed by monarchies which jealously safeguarded prerogatives and powers held since the institution of royalty in the Middle Ages; European diplomacy therefore evolved more in the royal courts than in parliaments and cabinets. It was a type of diplomacy that came about according to the rules of royal *bon ton*; hence diplomatic agreements were hallmarked by dynastic connections, the sovereigns' personal journeys were themselves diplomatic initiatives, and the words and attitudes of royal personages helped to create the aura surrounding their figures. Nonetheless there is no

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[13] L. SALVATORELLI, *Casa Savoia nella storia d'Italia*, Quaderni Liberi, Rome, 1944, pp. 36-7.
[14] F. CHABOD, *op. cit.*, p. 708.

doubt that the Italian monarchy's power in key sectors such as control over the armed forces and foreign policy (quite apart from the "royal" appointments of certain prime ministers) raises strong doubts about the "parliamentary" nature that some historians have attributed to the Savoy Crown.[15] It is important to remember that the Italian monarchy probably never took on the aspect of a parliamentary monarchy, given that the remnants of an absolute tradition still operated so that a completely parliamentary system was never enacted.

If this is the framework within which both the handling of military questions and above all of foreign policy came about, it becomes necessary to give a broad reconstruction of the Monarchy's role in elaborating foreign policy during the nineteenth century and in particular from Victor Emmanuel III's accession to the throne.[16]

From the "Father of the Fatherland" to the "Good King"

Control over the armed forces and foreign policy continued during the reign of Umberto I; the new sovereign's succession attenuated certain aspects of the monarchy's leading role under Victor Emmanuel II, while accentuating other aspects. As Domenico Bartoli recalls, Umberto at first "defended Crown prerogatives, yet all in all he did not go beyond the limits of the constitutional tradition".[17] In spite of his inexperience, the presence of a prime minister such as Agostino Depretis who was able to ensure the stability of the system, gave the young king confidence; in fact he did not intervene in questions of domestic policy. This royal "absenteeism", so different from Victor Emmanuel II's previous administration, in no way indicated that he was willing to give up his own prerogatives. After the death of Depretis and with an increased awareness of his role, the second stage of Umberto I's reign took shape: "his intervention became more apparent in forming governments, and especially in indicating prime ministers. The crises during the last decade of his reign were all outside parliament".[18]

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[15] For example, Carlo Ghisalberti stresses that after 1861 the monarchy was still strongly "within the representative-parliamentary scheme." C. GHISALBERTI, *Storia costituzionale d'Italia 1849-1948*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1974, p. 90.

[16] On this issue see: G. NICOLOSI, *La Corona e le feluche. Influenza regia e amministrazione degli Affari esteri nell'Italia liberale dagli anni della Destra Storica alla Grande guerra*, in F. PERFETTI (ed.), *Feluche d'Italia. Diplomazia e identità nazionale*, Le Lettere, Florence, 2012, pp. 27-65.

[17] D. BARTOLI, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

[18] IBID.

It was natural that the uncertain climate after the death of the leader of the Left and the progressive decline of the political struggle opened the way for the monarchy to return to an active political role at a time of severe government instability. In spite of his strong personality, Francesco Crispi did not curb the powers of royal intervention and was in fact mainly responsible for the 'political' revival of the Crown. Notwithstanding the king's personal input, the ruling liberal class was unable to understand the changes transforming Italian society at the time; the appearance of a "social" dimension in peasant and proletariat protests favoured Crown intervention in the face of political incompetence. The symptoms of the same short-sightedness afflicting the governing class appeared once more when it came to understanding the reasons for the social protests of the time. And this myopia proved even more serious for the Crown: having stepped out from under political cover, it became embroiled in a strongly reactionary domestic policy which was to lead to the ultimate sacrifice: the king's life.

Domestic policy was greatly influenced by Umberto I in the second part of his reign; yet in the above-mentioned sectors always so carefully guarded by the dynasty, interference was a constant, particularly when it came to choosing a "royal" foreign policy.

Initially, the bonds with France had led Victor Emmanuel II to consider flanking Napoleon III during the Franco-Prussian war[19] out of gratitude for France's support of Italian independence; this tendency was now replaced by a preference for the central Empires, due to the "Roman question". In France, the Catholics and the government exacerbated tensions over the Italian occupation of the Papal State and raised legal and political issues regarding the legitimacy of such occupation, an attitude that greatly irritated the top authorities in Italy. The determined support of internal irredentist and republican movements on the part of the French cabinet increased the Savoy Crown's distrust of the real intentions of its "cousin" nation, which continued to see in Italy the most obvious proof of Napoleon III's political failure. As a result, during the summer of 1873 and in the face of a possible war between Italy and France, the king was persuaded to travel to Vienna and Berlin in September to consolidate relations with the central Empires.

The rise of Benedetto Cairoli and Umberto I's inexperience for a while favoured closer relations with France and a foreign policy based on the

[19] R. PETRIGNANI, *Neutralità e alleanza. Le scelte di politica estera dell'Italia dopo l'Unità*, il Mulino, Bologna, 1987, pp. 19-20.

desire to remain free of any continental diplomatic combination[20]. This equidistant policy, however, soon met some evident setbacks; the diplomatic failures of both Luigi Corti's "clean hands" policy at the Berlin Conference in 1878 and in the later French occupation of Tunisia in May 1881 brought the liberal plan proposed by the Cairoli-Zanardelli government to a crisis. The revolutionary, pro-Garibaldi past of both Left-wing leaders, their irredentist fervour and their tendency to favour France were utterly at odds with the sovereign's intentions regarding foreign policy.

Numerous reasons, both personal and concerning domestic and foreign policy, were behind the orientation towards the alliance with the central Empires. As most memoirs and biographies record, both the court and especially the sovereigns admired the power of Germany. Commentaries agree on Queen Margherita's conservative, openly anti-French traits, and the sovereign himself, convinced of France's decline, was evidently attracted by Teutonic power; he even went so far as to keep Wilhelm I's portrait beside that of his father in the room where the Council of Ministers met.[21]

Personal reasons apart, there were also the above-mentioned domestic policy issues, mainly the sword of Damocles held poised over the new reign by the government and Catholics in France: the "Roman question". As Petrignani brilliantly summed up:

> In spite of a favourable economic period starting in 1878/1879, the political moment was undeniably fraught. The leftist government and the forthcoming extension of the electoral suffrage had created strong tensions. The rekindling of the Roman question had also substantially helped to radicalize the political battle in the country. Contrasts between anticlerical forces and Catholics set hostile sparks flying from both ends of the political spectrum. The Monarchy, trapped in between, was threatened on two fronts: from the left with republicanism relying on "Gambettism" and the pro-French democratic forces; yet the right-wing Catholic hostility was no less insidious. The reign's diplomatic isolation, the frustrations undergone by Italy and the Tunis humiliation were blamed on the Monarchy by Catholic anti-liberal propaganda which set out ever more insistently to belabour this question of national prestige. The Crown found

[20] "King Umberto had come to the throne only shortly before with nothing like the prestige and authority of his father to fit him for the role of political 'counterweight' and to reassure the moderates. Little was known of his ideas on foreign policy: simply that he was said to be a friend to Germany and Russia and had little consideration for either France or Austria", IBID., *op. cit.*, p. 148.

[21] P. PAULUCCI, *Alla corte di re Umberto. Diario segreto*, Rusconi, Milano 1986, p. 122.

> itself under attack and increasingly needed to strengthen and guard itself both against the Republic and against the Pope. The government therefore had to be convinced that the royal will was to undertake a more energetic, active policy to guarantee conservative forces while at the same time reassuring the country and giving it some satisfaction, and obtaining some diplomatic success. In the view of the Monarchists, this was the real significance of Italy's proposed alliance with the central empires. Hence the discreet yet weighty influence that the Crown must have brought to bear on the decisions to be made.[22]

Domestic policy reasons, therefore, played a part in favouring the alliance with the central empires; however, over-estimating their influence might lead to the mistaken belief that the alliance was stipulated merely for dynastic motivations. Again, as Petrignani recalls,

> The aim of the majority struggling for the alliance was not to introduce authoritarianism into Italy, curb freedom or limit the parliamentary system in spite of its faults. There were certainly many who hoped that the alliance would bring a swerve to the right in domestic policy, yet the immediate interest of the majority was in the creation of an international bond in order to moderate repercussions abroad caused by internal instability … The most immediate objective of the forthcoming bond was not domestic but international; it was the objective of stopping oscillations in Italian foreign policy. Freeing Italy of the suspicions aroused by these oscillations would facilitate the continuation of the actual domestic scenario: a country with a parliamentary system, a country that was non-authoritarian and liberal.[23]

From Petrignani's account we see how foreign policy motivated the stipulation of the Triple Alliance. Queen Margherita's dislike of all things French and Umberto I's preference for things Prussian, supported by the conservatives' fears for the existence of royalty in Italy in the face of French Catholic machinations, found fertile international terrain in the French action in North Africa. It was the French occupation of Tunis (let us not forget that there were almost one million Italian settlers there) that determined what Enrico Serra rightly termed the "swing in Italian foreign policy"[24] towards the Triple Alliance. This shift was to characterise and condition the direction of foreign policy until the outbreak of the First World War and was triggered by the progressive deterioration in Italo-French relations. This deterioration worsened alarmingly during the

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[22] R. PETRIGNANI, *op. cit.*, pp. 300-01.
[23] IBID., p. 315.
[24] E. SERRA, *La questione tunisina da Crispi a Rudinì ed il 'colpo di timone' alla politica estera dell'Italia*, Giuffrè, Milan, 1967.

second part of Umberto I's reign, all the more so with Francesco Crispi at the head of the government. It is in this complex, many-faceted framework that Umberto I's diplomatic moves in seeking the alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary are best seen. The king was irremovable in his decision to visit Vienna, where he was unwillingly accompanied by his ministers from October 27 to 31. 1881. The diplomatic negotiations started during this visit.[25] These negotiations once more saw the sovereign intervene directly on the prime minister in the meeting of December 1881 in order to overcome Depretis continued opposition to leaving the "equidistant" policy in order to undertake a final move towards the Germanic world.[26]

The Triple Alliance treaty was eventually signed on May 20. 1882. It would be true to say that Umberto I was the author of Italy's decision in this field. As we have said, it was a decision later confirmed in the reign of the "Good King", with further clauses. As well as reasserting that the alliance was in no way to be considered anti-England, these clauses provided for maintaining the *status quo* in the Balkans as agreed between Italy and Austria-Hungary, and German support for Italian demands regarding both French metropolitan territory and colonial issues in the case of a conflict between Italy and France. Although the alliance continued to be basically conservative in character, and although Italy was guaranteed only against any active policy on the part of another power (Austria-Hungary in the Balkans and France in Africa), it is clear that the subsequent renewals of the Triple Alliance, with the addition of commercial treaties, fulfilled the aims of Italian foreign policy. On the one hand, Italy was confident of obtaining territorial changes in Venezia Giulia and Trentino by peaceful means and through compensation, thus crowning the national Risorgimento; on the other, the Triple Alliance would guarantee Italy's more immediate penetration of the Horn of Africa.

While the Triple Alliance continued to be a system of alliances guaranteeing Italy's position internationally, in effect it did not enable Italy either to obtain frontier changes from Austria-Hungary, or to make any practical use, beyond token diplomatic statements, of Austro-German military support in the colonial operations undertaken by Italy during the Crispi era.

Crispi's departure from the scene and the downsizing of the African dream after the Adowa defeat demonstrated the failure of the one-way foreign policy undertaken by the Sicilian prime minister and the sovereign.

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[25] On the process of the diplomatic negotiations see: R. PETRIGNANI, *op. cit.*; L. SALVATORELLI, *La Triplice Alleanza. Storia diplomatica 1877-1912*, Ispi, Milan, 1939.

[26] R. PETRIGNANI, *op. cit.*, p. 307 and ff.

After the appointment of the Marquis Di Rudinì and later under the government of General Luigi Pelloux, this failure had encouraged disengagement from Africa and a *ralliement* with France, culminating in the return of the Marquis Visconti Venosta as foreign minister from 1899 to 1901.

The reign of Victor Emmanuel III

The accession to the throne of Victor Emmanuel III marked a complete rupture with the previous period. After his father's tragic end, the young king's first speech to the Chambers showed that he intended to retrieve a normally-functioning political system.

The king's will to break with the past appeared evident; this discontinuity was of course politically motivated, but it was also due to the sovereign's personal beliefs. At least during this first stage, he was more inclined to support a new course for Italian liberalism.[27] Showing admirable strength of character in spite of his youth and the circumstances of his succession, he had to counteract pressure exerted by the advocates of repressive domestic policy.[28] It is therefore hardly surprising that the king decided to get rid of the old senator Giuseppe Saracco at the first opportunity in order to appoint Zanardelli as prime minister, assisted by Giolitti at the interior ministry. Strenuously opposed by the Queen Mother, the sovereign's choice of this man from the Left made it unequivocally clear that the new king wished to give a sign of "novelty" after the

[27] According to Silvio Bertoldi, "Already during his journey across Italy to reach Monza, Victor Emmanuel's intention was above all to be a constitutional king. Enough, therefore, of extra-parliamentary crises, governments stitched together at the Quirinal Palace, law decrees, the policy of the sword. Since he was young and alert, the king realized that Italy now needed a breathing period after prolonged tension between the working classes and the government. And that was what the monarchy also needed if it wanted to defuse a situation that was almost at breaking-point. Each unto his own place", S. BERTOLDI, *Vittorio Emanuele III*, Utet, Turin, 1970, p. 159.

[28] Speaking in confidence to French ambassador in Rome Camille Barrère, Victor Emmanuel III said that "quand je suis arrivé au trône à la suite de la mort de mon père, M. Saracco, qui pourtant se targuait de libéralisme, me proposa, pour mon début, trois projets de lois d'exception terriblement réactionnaires. Naturellement je n'en voulus pas entendre parler; et, en somme, nous ne nous sommes pas mal trouvés d'être restés libéraux et modérés et de nous être contentés de la loi"., *Documents Diplomatiques Français* (henceforth DDF) *(1871-1914)*, Deuxieme série (1901-1914), tome X (10 avril 1906-16 mai 1907), Imprimerie Nationale, Paris, 1948, d. 42, M. Barrère to M. Pichon, February 20. 1907, p. 419.

previous period and to sustain the progressive turn in Italian liberalism embodied by the two politicians. This will to change, supported by steely determination and a remarkable capacity for work, enabled the king to represent the new Italy that was taking shape at that time.

Thus it was that he found a perfect symbiosis first in Zanardelli and then in Giolitti. The statesman from Dronero, in particular, with whom he chatted in the Piedmont dialect, embodied Victor Emmanuel's new Italy: industrious, proactive, not inclined to "adventures", caring about the needs of the people. In fact:

> Giolitti's programme was not only about scrupulously following the liberal method of state government and allowing freedom to workers' organizations. He intended to undertake reforms: his motive was to give substance to freedom. He wanted the method of government to coincide with increased welfare of the most numerous classes. Giolitti's programme on this point totally matched the king's. Victor Emmanuel well represented the archetype of a democratic king.[29]

From this happy union, a line of domestic policy arose, almost completely under Giolitti's control, leading to the "Giolitti decade" when Italy experienced her first period of industrialisation and an overall growth in all fields: economic, social and civil. It should be noted, however, that the pathway inaugurated by the young king and his prime minister should not mislead us into thinking that the new sovereign was less attentive to his prerogatives. Victor Emmanuel realised how politically vulnerable the monarchy had been under Umberto I at the end of the century, yet his non-intervention in domestic policy was due to the fact that he had found a prime minister in whom he had confidence, both in his political outlook that accorded with his own, and because he felt certain of his ability to control parliament and the bureaucratic-administrative machinery in the face of the decline of the political system revealed during the last part of Umberto I's reign. Since the liberal governing class seemed no longer able to control the political situation at home, Victor Emmanuel III had no hesitation in using his own power, although more discreetly, in issues of domestic policy.

A further aspect in which royal control never failed, even at this "democratic" stage of the reign, was the maintenance of his power over the army and foreign policy. As regards the former, the king's conduct was no different from his father's policy, both in personally deciding on ministerial appointments, and in reinforcing the potential for war.

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[29] U. D'ANDREA, *La fine del Regno*, Società editrice torinese, Turin, 1951, p. 99.

The sovereign's control focused mainly on foreign policy: to this field Victor Emmanuel devoted his greatest attention and care.

The foreign policy of a king

Anxious to act as a constitutional king as regards domestic policy, the sovereign exercised his statutory prerogatives in choosing his personal foreign policy. His attention to international affairs can be put down to a number of factors: his passion for history, his family's history in particular but also the general history of nations; his attention to classification and order; his sense of royalty and therefore of royal traditions which naturally led him to address the affairs of the single states and their relations with each other. Never very keen on fine arts and literature, Victor was an attentive observer and critic of men and things, with a strong interest in political happenings. As the French ambassador in Rome, Camille Barrère, remarked, the king

> écoute avec attention, parle avec précision, interroge et répond d'un accent net et délibéré. Ses propos, si je peux ainsi m'exprimer, sont plus ceux d'un homme que d'un souverain, et même d'un homme fort bien informé sur toutes choses. Et ses réflexions trahissent une liberté d'esprit qui est pour impressionner favorablement ses interlocuteurs. On s'aperçoit vite, à son contact, que ce qui le domine, c'est la curiosité des affaires politiques poussée jusqu'à la passion.[30]

When he ascended the throne, the young king had to deal with the rapprochement with France and the loosening of ties with the central empires carried forward thanks to Visconti Venosta's able diplomacy; a diplomacy made necessary to extricate Italy from the blind alley in which it found itself through the decidedly pro-Triple Alliance policy of both Crispi and Umberto I. Not only did Victor Emmanuel support the process already under way in Italian diplomacy, he actively contributed to it. Particularly significant for an understanding of royal diplomacy's new approach are the reports frequently sent by the ambassador in Rome, Camille Barrère, to his minister of foreign affairs. Such documents should be used with due caution, yet the picture emerging seems to portray a sovereign who intended to carry out an important role in foreign policy, a person of higher than average intelligence, sympathetic to irredentist

[30] DDF, Deuxieme série (1901-1911), tome Premier (2 janvier 1901-31 décembre 1901), Imprimerie Nationale, Paris, 1930, d. 226, M. Barrère to M. Delcassé, December 10. 1901, p. 662.

claims and hopeful of a rapprochement with France and England, anxious to be free of the Teutonic alliance stranglehold. After his first contacts with the sovereign, and having reported a revival of irredentist feeling in the country,[31] Barrère had mentioned the qualities of the new king. His essentially positive opinion of Victor was accompanied by an appraisal of his personal inclinations regarding the system of European alliances:

> Mon collègue de Russie, en situation d'être bien informé, … il croit et il espère que l'influence de son Empereur, qui nourrit pour le jeune souverain une sympathie que celui-ci portage, pourra s'exercer au Quirinal au grand avantage de la Double Alliance. Mon collègue russe m'a confié à ce propos ce qu'il savait des tendances de Victor-Emmanuel III en matière de politique étrangère, et ces informations sont fort curieuses. Le Roi est irrédentiste. Il déteste l'Autriche, et ses sentiments à l'égard de l'Empereur Guillaume ne sont pas ceux qu'on lui attribués. Il admire ses procédés de gouvernement et cherche à les imiter, mais il n'a pour sa personne qu'une médiocre sympathie … Le Grand-Duc Pierre Nicolaiévitch … lui ayant parlé familièrement de l'avenir, et du désir de le voir pratiquer une politique plus indépendante et plus libre, le Roi lui répondit: Si c'est aux alliances de l'Italie que tu fais allusion, je suis de ton avis, et j'entends bien rester libre de mes actions et ne subordonner à personne l'indépendance de l'Italie. *Je ne veux plus de cette Triple Alliance; elle m'étouffe, j'en ai assez.*[32]

This dispatch from Camille Barrère points out both the sovereign's personal vocation and his future diplomatic strategy. On the question of irredentism, the king's position is difficult to define clearly. Two appointments certainly support the impression that the new sovereign was fully aware of events across the Adriatic: that of Zanardelli as prime minister,[33] a man known for his strongly irredentist past; and, to replace Visconti Venosta as foreign minister, that of Giulio Prinetti who favoured

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[31] DDF, Premier série (1871-1900), tome XVI (18 novembre 1899-30 décembre 1900), Imprimerie Nationale, Paris, 1959, d. 373, M. Barrère to M. Delcassé, November 12. 1900, pp. 518-21.

[32] DDF, Premier série (1871-1900), tome XVI (18 novembre 1899-30 décembre 1900), Imprimerie Nationale, Paris, 1959, d. 374, M. Barrère to M. Delcassé, November 12. 1900, p. 522.

[33] "The choice of Zanardelli, known for his irredentist leanings, had been interpreted as an anti-Triple move. It was also significant that the new foreign minister Prinetti more or less openly encouraged irredentism against Austria, to which Italy is bound; and Visconti Venosta before him, in December 1900, had made an agreement with France giving Italy a free hand in Africa", R. BRACALINI, *Il Re 'vittorioso'*, Feltrinelli, Milan, 1980, p. 69.

closer ties with France. This is how things appeared to Monts, the German ambassador in Rome; recognising signs of the growing irredentism soon to complicate relations between Italy and Austria-Hungary, in 1903 he pointed out that:

> It is true that anti-Austrian feeling has not yet penetrated the masses. The Italian farmhand is still too embroiled with economic troubles to think of anything else. It is true that the generation of Risorgimento patriots has vanished and that the Austrian administration is praised for its successes in Lombardy and in Veneto. It is true that the generation now in power grew up in a pro-Triple Alliance climate. Yet regrettably the educated youth of today is full of irredentist ideas. One might even say that patriotism and irredentism are one and the same thing for Italian youth… he who leads the young, holds the future. Before long educated Italians will distance themselves from the Triple. What Italian government will be strong enough to oppose this kind of feeling?.[34]

The king himself must be numbered among this generation of young educated Italians; as we have said, he was fully entitled to represent the spirit of the times.

The other significant factor mentioned by Barrère is hostility towards Austria-Hungary. This attitude was enhanced in Victor Emmanuel III by the irredentist question, yet relations between the Italian and Austrian sovereigns were rendered even more arduous by frequently conflicting personal matters and strategic considerations.

The young king was evidently very disappointed with the political circles in Vienna when his visit to Franz Josef was not returned. The international reason advising against such a meeting between the two sovereigns was the Austrian emperor's fear of offending the Holy See; the latter did not want to see an encounter in Rome between the emperor of a Catholic power such as Austria-Hungary and a dynasty that had usurped Peter's property. Victor Emmanuel III, so conscious of his own regal dignity and the prestige of his lineage, never forgave this "slight" on the part of the emperor of Austria; a personal rift widening over time was the outcome.

This personal "slight" was associated with the Italian Crown's reawakened interest in the Danube-Balkan area, an interest undoubtedly due to personal ties with the Montenegro dynasty after the marriage between Victor Emmanuel and Yelena Petrović-Niegoš. Not only was

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[34] G. CAPRIN, "I documenti diplomatici tedeschi sugli inizi del regno di V.E. III – L'Italia sotto il giogo della "Triplice" e i primi tentativi di politica indipendente", II, *Il Corriere della Sera*, July 6. 1924.

Victor Emmanuel well informed regarding events in the area in question, he was also particularly attentive both to the politics of Montenegro[35] and to the maintenance of the *status quo* in Albania just before the 1902 renewal of the Triple Alliance.[36] Although Italian diplomacy, seeking to reassure Vienna, repeatedly stressed its own independence of events in Montenegro,[37] there can be no doubt that the king's interest in Balkan affairs increased as a result of his marriage ties. These ties should not give the impression that Italy's new political orientation towards the Balkans contrasted with Victor Emmanuel III's personal wish to see his country play a more active role on the international scene, outlining or returning to one of the main lines of national foreign policy: the Danube-Balkan issue; such a policy obviously saw Vienna opposed to Rome.

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[35] "Regarding Bollati, I still believe he will not be happy to go to Cettinje; however, if he is to pursue the career to which his merits entitle him, he must resign himself for some time to having a residence that is not of the best. He will however have the satisfaction of being in a highly sensitive post where he will have scope to earn the appreciation even of His Majesty, who is naturally very much interested in the politics enacted in Montenegro." *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani* (henceforth DDI), terza serie, 1896-1907, vol. V (16 febbraio-31 dicembre 1901), Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, Libreria dello Stato, Roma, 1979, d. 603, private letter from G. Prinetti to C. Nigra, Rome July 13. 1901, p. 328.

[36] "Yet regarding the two articles to replace the VI and the VII on the Balkans, seeing that Count Bülow told us that he would in the main be happier to support the draft first agreed upon between Italy and Austria-Hungary, I would ask you to inform Count Goluchowski and get his reaction. In spite of what you recently wrote to me regarding the wish of Count Goluchowski to avoid changes, it appears to me that what we are proposing should not meet with opposition from him. In fact the single aim of the new draft of art. VI is to commit Germany further in defence of the *status quo* in Constantinople under the principle of non-intervention of other powers, and I believe that if we could obtain this, Austria-Hungary should be just as satisfied as we are, if not more so. Art. VII furthermore is altered only as regards Albania. It seems to me quite natural that on the occasion of the renewal of the alliance, the dispositions of the treaty should be in line with the agreements intervening between us after it was laid down: and it also seems to me that it would be useful for both of us that the agreements previously made for Albania should be extended to Macedonia. In any case I inform you that His Majesty is particularly interested in this new draft of article VII", DDI, Terza serie, 1896-1907, vol. VI (1° gennaio-30 giugno 1902), Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, Libreria dello Stato, Rome, 1985, d. 177, private letter from G. Prinetti to C. Nigra, Rome February 25. 1902, pp. 128-29. On these issues see: L. MONZALI, *Italiani di Dalmazia. Dal Risorgimento alla grande guerra*, Le Lettere, Florence, 2004.

[37] DDI, Terza serie, 1896-1907, vol. V, cit., d. 709, private letter from G. Prinetti, to C. Nigra, Rome August 17. 1901, pp. 391-92.

The old hostility towards Austria, therefore, surfaced again under the new sovereign; however, unlike his father, Victor Emmanuel did not appear to appreciate Wilhelm II's character.

While the Italian king was fascinated by, occasionally fearful of, German power, Wilhelm II's thrusting, intemperate personality was quite the opposite of his own introverted, occasionally shy character. Camille Barrère, who must be given credit for his careful observation of the Italian sovereign's psychology,[38] was probably right in stressing that

> le roi d'Italie déteste l'Empereur. Il voit avec irritation ce Souverain théâtral venir en Sicilie se tailler des ovations à ses dépens parmi les moins fidèle de ses sujets. Il le trouve prépotent, insolent et compromettant. Rien ne lui est plus désagréable que d'avoir à le rejoindre et à subir ses périlleuses embrassades.[39]

Friendly relations existed between the courts of Russia and Savoy,[40] therefore Moscow's future influence in redirecting Italian foreign policy was a distinct possibility.[41] This, together with what has already been said, explains the worries and doubts at the courts of Berlin and Vienna. caused by the new sovereign's accession to the throne. Such worries and doubts drove the allies to urge the new sovereign to maintain faith with the Triple Alliance,[42] which was in fact renewed in 1902. That relations were marked

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[38] In analysing Barrère's attempt to probe the psychology of Victor Emmanuel, Enrico Serra points out that "these observations, however exact they were for their time, are even more significant in that German and Austrian diplomacy did not take the trouble to assess the new sovereign's character. The French ambassador, however, had learnt not to underestimate the effect of his perspicacity and the degree of his influence on foreign policy". E. SERRA, *Camille Barrère e l'intesa italo-francese*, Giuffré, Milan, 1950, pp. 103-04.

[39] DDF, Deuxieme série (1901-1911), tome VI (2 janvier-6 juin 1905), Imprimerie Nationale, Paris, 1935, d. 268, M. Barrère to M. Delcassé, April 10. 1905, p. 335.

[40] DDF, Deuxieme série (1901-1911), tome Premier (2 janvier-31décembre 1901), Imprimerie Nationale, Paris, 1930, d. 302, M. Barrère to M. Delcassé, June 26. 1901, pp. 352-53.

[41] DDF, Deuxieme série (1901-1911), tome Premier (2 janvier-31décembre 1901), cit., d. 365. M. Albert Legrand to M. Delcassé, August 19. 1901, pp. 434-36.

[42] "D'après un renseignement confidentiel méritant une certaine créance, une pression considérable serai faite depuis quelques jours sur le Roi pour l'amener à un renouvellement anticipé des alliances germaniques. Le Roi résisterait, mais pourrai bien finir par se laisser forcer la main. L'initiative de cette action proviendrait de Vienne; elle aurait pour point de départ l'avènement du nouveau ministère.", DDF, Deuxieme série (1901-1911), tome Premier (2 janvier-

by a certain coolness, however, is shown by the fact that Victor Emmanuel had no wish to renew the military convention previously stipulated by his father with Germany.[43] Royal strategy, therefore, was indeed to continue within the framework of the Triple Alliance (in all probability neither the king nor his ministers ever thought of leaving it) while at the same time carrying out those "*giri di valzer*" so acidly depicted by Prince Bülow to allow Italy more room for manoeuvre in both the Balkan and the African contexts.

In fact, the years following 1902 saw a move in this direction: the king of Italy's visit to England and to France and the return visits by the President of the Republic Loubet and then by Edward VII, marked Rome's gradual approach to the western capitals. This approach came to a temporary halt when the Court of the Tsar failed to return Victor's previous visit, after which relations seemed to deteriorate between Rome and Moscow. Victor Emmanuel, so mindful of protocol and so imbued with the sense of his own royalty, could not accept this failure to return his visit,[44] a visit that was put off not only as a face-saving measure to avoid any protests by Italian socialists during the Tsar's visit, but also because of the recent Austro-Russian agreement on the Balkans signed with the intention of excluding Italy from the region.

Once this particular bone of contention between the Savoy and Tsarist courts was overcome, the next few years brought an increasing number of reasons for friction between Rome and the courts of Berlin and Vienna. The clashes between Italian and German students at Innsbruck University in 1903 sparked a strong wave of irredentism throughout the country; the re-arming of Austria-Hungary during 1904 increased the tension with Italy so much so that military intervention was feared; the first Moroccan crisis and the open support of France by the Italian delegation under Visconti Venosta at Algeciras intensely annoyed Wilhelm II; and, lastly, Austria's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908, as well as the planned

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31décembre 1901), cit., d. 104, M. Barrère to M. Delcassè, February 24. 1901, p. 124.

[43] "For the current up-dating of this agreement there were contacts in February 1901 between the Germany military attaché von Chelius with the Commander in Chief Saletta and with Victor Emmanuel III himself, whence emerged difficulties in activating the plan. Victor Emmanuel III was against sending that army out of Italy, believing such a move would pose a threat to Italian security.", L. SALVATORELLI, *La Triplice*, cit., p. 239.

[44] DDF, Deuxieme série (1901-1911), tome IV (5 octobre 1903-8 avril 1904), Imprimerie Nationale, Paris, 1932, d. 134, M. Barrère to M. Delcassé, December 21. 1903, pp. 195-96.

attack on Italy by the Austrian High Command after the disastrous Messina earthquake; all these were crucial events that led to the effective end of the Triple Alliance, although not to a formal break. Neither Giolitti's assurances to Bülow when they met in Homburg, nor the appointment of Tommaso Tittoni as foreign minister[45] to replace Prinetti as the sovereign wished, seemed to tranquilise the Austro-German courts, let alone resuscitate the Alliance. The Triple Alliance had in fact lost most of its original significance in the aftermath of the agreements between Visconti Venosta and Barrère and, later, between Prinetti and Barrère; at that point it proved an efficient instrument with which to curb the aggressive policies of Germany in Europe and Austria in the Balkans.

This was the new international scenario that royal diplomacy had helped to create; against this background the problem arose of redeeming the "blank cheque" Italy had obtained in European circles regarding the possible occupation of Cyrenaica-Tripolitania.

"Tripoli bel suol d'amor…"

France's occupation of Tunisia had put a stop to Italian aspirations to colonise there, yet Italy still sought "the key to the Mediterranean in the Red Sea", as foreign minister Pasquale Stanislao Mancini told the Chamber on January 27. 1885. Without attempting a detailed assessment of the outcome of Italian colonialism in the Horn of Africa[46] (supported by the historical Left, particularly by Francesco Crispi), it should be noted that the second renewal of the Triple Alliance in 1887 included a clause referring explicitly to possible action by Italy, if attacked, both in Morocco and in Cyrenaica-Tripolitania.[47] These two areas, not included in the end-of-century Italian colonial movements, later formed the basis for the Franco-Italian rapprochement both through the exchange of notes between Visconti Venosta and Barrère and through subsequent agreements between

[45] Regarding Tommaso Tittoni's foreign policy, see: F. TOMMASINI, *L'Italia alla vigilia della guerra: la politica estera di Tommaso Tittoni*, vol. V, Zanichelli, Bologna, 1934-1941.

[46] On such points, see: F. GRASSI ORSINI, *Le origini dell'imperialismo italiano: il caso somalo, 1896-1915*, Milella, Lecce, 1980; L. MONZALI, *L'Etiopia nella politica estera italiana, 1896-1915*, Facoltà di Giurisprudenza dell'Università di Parma, Parma, 1996; G. NICOLOSI, *Imperialismo e resistenza in Corno d'Africa: Mohammed Abdullah Hassan e il derviscimo somalo (1899-1920)*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2002.

[47] L. SAIU, *La politica estera italiana dall'Unità a oggi*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1999, p. 31.

Prinetti and Barrère. These agreements assigned Morocco to the French sphere of influence and Cyrenaica-Tripolitania to the Italian sphere. The later Mediterranean Agreement between Italy and England in 1902 set out: the reciprocal spheres of influence in the area; the renewal of the Triple Alliance in 1902 with Austria explicitly consenting to the Italian interest in Africa; and the stipulation of the Racconigi Bargain between Italy and Russia in 1909 ratifying the rapprochement between the two courts with the recognition of reciprocal interests in Africa and the Straits. All these factors had made it evident that the issue of the future occupation by Italy of the two territories was taken for granted and, at that point, depended only on the Giolitti government.

During those years, however, Giolitti and his "lieutenants" were dealing with the enormous task of setting the country back onto a safe financial keel, an achievement successful from many points of view. Among these, the conversion of government bonds, the nationalisation of the railways and sea transport, and the implementation of social policies to relieve the conditions of the poorest classes. Among the latter, social legislation, the undertaking of public works in southern Italy, electoral reform and, lastly, instituting the first part of the future INA (National Insurance Institute). The main preoccupation of Giolitti was the economic reorganisation of the nation. This went hand in hand, as we have said, with the sovereign's foreign policy which apparently focused principally on the Danube-Balkan area, without showing any particular interest for a penetration policy in Africa. This inclination of the king was reinforced both by his tendency to assess Italy's international commitments in the light of the country's practical interests, and the memory of Crispi's disastrous colonial policy.

The king's attitude was a clear factor in the prudent progress of Italian diplomacy towards any possible occupation of Cyrenaica-Tripolitania. Indeed a change started to appear from 1908 on: while the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina had reinforced irredentist factions and awakened the first signs of Italian nationalism, the Revolution of the Young Turks, initially greeted warmly by public opinion and Italian political circles,[48] soon proved a negative factor for Italian interests in Cyrenaica-Tripolitania. As well as the effective presence of settlers, such interests were the outcome of the economic penetration of the Bank of Rome, directly connected to the Holy See. As De Luigi recalled, "from the day when the Banco di Roma opened its Tripoli branch, Italian penetration

[48] S. CILIBRIZZI, *Storia politica parlamentare diplomatica d'Italia da Novara a Vittorio Veneto*, vol. IV (1909-1914), Tosi editore, Naples, s.d., p. 154.

in Tripolitania was all one with the action of the Bank itself", so that "half the goods imported and exported from Tripoli in 1910 travelled under our flag; all education for the Maltese and the Jews, as well as for the Italians, was imparted in our schools; all banking relations with the rest of the world depended on the Banco di Roma, pioneer of the Italian spirit".[49]

However, the rise of the Young Turks strengthened a policy against Italian penetration and revealed the Ottoman interest in German economic expansion. This posed a risk to Italian interests in the area although they had been ratified by international treaties. The situation took a decided turn for the worse with the outbreak of the second Moroccan crisis in 1911. The arrival of the cruiser *Panther* in Agadir Bay and the opening of negotiations between France and Germany to arrange reciprocal spheres of influence in Africa forced the Italian government to hasten the initiative itself. In his long memo sent at the end of July 1911, foreign minister Antonino Di San Giuliano[50] reminded the king and Giolitti that

> France is loyally adhering to the 1902 agreement, but today it is in its interests to respect it, as it has not yet Tunisified Morocco. This interest of France's will end when it has Tunisified Morocco, that is, when that part of the Franco-Italian agreement that favours France has achieved its aim and the only part yet to be applied is that favourable to Italy.[51]

In the view of the foreign minister, this might induce France to disregard its commitments towards Italy, which would then be alone in contrasting, on the one hand, the attempts by the central empires to prevent a war against the Ottoman Empire with which Germany had excellent relations, and, on the other, the aggressive policy for German commercial penetration in Cyrenaica-Tripolitania.

Certainly not motivated merely by international prestige and hence the need to avoid a "second" Tunisia, government circles accelerated military

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[49] G. DE LUIGI, *Il Mediterraneo nella politica europea*, Jovene, Naples, s.d. p. 440 and p. 439.

[50] For more information about Marquis Antonino Di San Giuliano, see G. FERRAIOLI, *Politica e diplomazia in Italia tra XIX e XX secolo. Vita di Antonino Di San Giuliano*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2007.

[51] Confidential memo from Di San Giuliano to king Victor Emmanuel III and to the prime minister and the minister of internal affairs, Giolitti, Fiuggi July 28. 1911, *Giovanni Giolitti al Governo, in Parlamento, nel Carteggio*, III, *Il Carteggio*, tomo II (1906-1928), A.A. MOLA-A.G. RICCI (ed.), Bastogi, Foggia, 2010, p. 205.

preparations.[52] An equally important reason (stressed by Di San Giuliano[53]) was the ever-increasing feeling throughout the country in favour of Italian intervention in defence of Italian rights. In this context, the propaganda of the new-born nationalist movement had its weight. As Raffaele Molinelli recalled, "it had managed to bring pressure to bear on the interests and sentiments common in certain very influential levels of Italian society and in wide sectors of the middle and lower classes".[54]

All these factors, as well as pressure on the Bank of Rome to demand greater safeguard of its own interests, even to the point of hinting at a possible interruption of its financial activity with Austro-German banks,[55] induced the government to hasten military preparations and plan the action for the end of September. The final decision on military action was in effect made by four people: the foreign minister, the prime minister, the army chief of staff, and the king. It is certainly true, as has been recently underlined, that royal action and government action with regard to the Libyan enterprise were almost identical.[56] The king must have been aware of the pro-war feeling in the country and also that, on the occasion of the

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[52] On the Libyan War, W. C. ASKEW, *Europe and Italy's Acquisition of Lybia 1911-1912*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1942; G. VOLPE, *L'impresa di Tripoli 1911-12*, Edizioni Leonardo, Rome, 1946; F. MALGERI, *La guerra libica (1911-1912)*, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, Rome, 1979; T. W. CHILDS, *Italo-Turkish Diplomacy and the War over Libya 1911-1912*, Brill, Leiden-New York, 1990; S. ROMANO, *La quarta sponda. La guerra di Libia*, Bompiani, Milan, 1977; A. DEL BOCA, *Gli italiani in Libia. Tripoli bel suol d'amore*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1986, pp. 3-202; S. TRINCHESE, *Mare nostrum. Percezione ottomana e mito mediterraneo in Italia all'alba del '900*, Guerini, Milan, 2006; N. LABANCA, *La guerra italiana per la Libia 1911-1931*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2012.

[53] "Because in Italy the sentiment is alive and widespread, albeit unfounded, that the government's foreign policy is too submissive and that Italy's interests and dignity are not sufficiently respected, and the feeling is alive and generalized that national energy should be vigorously affirmed in some manner", *Giovanni Giolitti al Governo, in Parlamento, nel Carteggio*, III, *Il Carteggio*, tomo II (1906-1928), cit., p. 206.

[54] R. MOLINELLI, *Per una storia del nazionalismo italiano*, Argalia editore, Urbino, 1966, p. 128.

[55] A highly confidential letter from Di San Giuliano to Giolitti, Valombrosa August 9. 1911, *Giovanni Giolitti al Governo, in Parlamento, nel Carteggio*, III, *Il Carteggio*, tomo II (1906-1928), cit., pp. 207-09.

[56] A.A. MOLA, *Il travagliato ingresso di Giovanni Giolitti alla Camera. Candidatura, vittoria e richiesta di annullamento per ineleggibilità (luglio 1882-aprile 1883)*, *Giovanni Giolitti al Governo, in Parlamento, nel Carteggio*, III, *Il Carteggio*, tomo I (1887-1905), A.A. MOLA-A.G. RICCI (ed.), Bastogi, Foggia, 2009, p. 15.

celebration of fifty years since unification, a victorious war would symbolise solid national unity, the best tribute to the work for unity undertaken by his forebears. The sovereign's hesitation regarding the African initiative certainly did not cease. The opinion, perhaps questionable, of the French chargé d'affaires in Rome, Laroche, on the sovereign's opposition to military action,[57] indicates that the king continued to be vexed by doubt. Even an author like Gioacchino Volpe, whose loyalty to the monarchy cannot be questioned, stressed that

> We do not know what part the king had in the decision regarding the Libya initiative apart from what was required by his duties and rights as a constitutional king and his ability to interpret the common feeling of the nation. He was not enthusiastic about Tripoli, at least with regard to the economic outlook. And in the chamber it was even possible for a member to allude to an "important personage" who had spoken of Libya as a land of no value. Finally even he became convinced that we could not wait until we were totally surrounded in the Mediterranean; and moreover he was glad of the occasion offered to raise the army's morale, still weighed down by Adowa. Certainly, less enthusiasm than King Umberto had had for Ethiopia fifteen years previously. It was the memory of his father and the crisis undergone by the Monarchy after that tragic campaign that made King Victor so careful now, when faced with another colonial venture.[58]

The king's attitude should not surprise us in view of what has been said of his character, so unlike his father's, and of his pragmatic view of Italy's international interests, with the result that Libya would really appear as little other than "a large box of sand".

However, when the king's resistance had been overcome (and Giolitti and Di San Giuliano played their part in this), he certainly took great care that military preparations should be sufficient and adequate to the effort

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[57] "On à pretendu, en effet, que le Roi était hostile à une action en Tripolitaine. Cela est vraisemblable, et s'explique par la sympathie qu'il temoigne (certains disent par un sentiment de conservation dynastique) aux socialistes, qui sont résolutement contraires à l'expédition et menacent de proclamer la grève générale. L'événement prouve que le Souverain a dû s'incliner devant un courant d'opinion plus fort encore, et on peut supposer que sa conversion définitive date d'une visite que lui a faite il y a quatre jours M. Giolitti. C'est le lendemain, en effet, que le Ministre des Affaires étrangères est revenu à Rome, et que l'affaire est entrée dans un phase résolutive.", DDF, Deuxieme série (1901-1911), tome XIV (1er juliet- 4 novembre 1911), Imprimerie Nationale, Paris, 1955, d. 348, M. Laroche to M. de Selves, September 23. 1911, p. 490.

[58] G. VOLPE, *Italia Moderna 1910-1914*, vol. III, Le Lettere, Florence, 2002, pp. 399-400.

involved.[59] In this regard, his support did not fail on the occasion of the Cyrenaica-Tripolitania annexation decree on November 5. Although it caused international protest, this decree served to avoid moves by other countries to resolve tension between Italy and the Ottoman Empire through an international conference, thus hindering the military campaign already under way. He also intervened with regard to military operations with suggestions relating to a possible extension of the war to the Aegean.[60] Nor did his support fail when the Ouchy Treaty was signed, as has recently been shown by the publication of Giolitti's correspondence.[61] It was in this manner that Victor Emmanuel III became orientated towards a military action which, once decided upon, had to be carried through victoriously to assure Italy her place among the great European powers. After celebrations for the Fiftieth Anniversary of Unity, the year 1911 therefore closed with the African initiative. In spite of some temporary friction with France that was to hold back the sovereign's "western" policy, this initiative made the king aware "that one stage in the history of our Italian homeland was closing, the stage of formation and stabilization, while another commenced, the stage of true unity, including moral unity".[62]

[59] When Giolitti called the chief of staff, General Pollio, to warn him to be ready for action, the answer he received was that twenty thousand men would suffice. On the orders of the king, the prime minister responded that he should prepare forty thousand. Approximately forty thousand men were in fact disembarked in two landings.", A. CONSIGLIO, *Vita di un Re Vittorio Emanuele III*, Cappelli, Bologna, 1970, p. 89.

[60] "Yesterday evening I saw General Robilant and I was impressed by his opinion that Turkey will drag things out, especially being convinced that the attitude of the Powers will stop Italy from making that decisive strike which is the only thing to put an end to the war. In view of the continuation of the present situation, should the government decide on action in the Aegean, it will of course be necessary that military preparations and adequate equipment be ready in time. I am always ready to travel quickly to Rome should you wish to speak to me.", Telegram from Victor Emmanuel III to Giolitti, San Rossore October 25. 1911, *Giovanni Giolitti al Governo, in Parlamento, nel Carteggio*, III, *Il Carteggio*, tomo II (1906-1928), cit., p. 269.

[61] *Giovanni Giolitti al Governo, in Parlamento, nel Carteggio*, III, *Il Carteggio*, tomo II (1906-1928), cit.

[62] G. VOLPE, *Vittorio Emanuele III*, Ispi, Milan, 1939, pp. 91-2.

CHAPTER III

THE WAR IN LIBYA AND THE ITALIAN NATIONALISM

GIUSEPPE PARLATO[1]

The historiographical issue

Franco Gaeta claimed that the Libyan War was "the great opportunity for the nationalists, and certainly not a lost opportunity".[2] We may well agree with this proposition, and it enables us to consider the question at the root of Raffaele Molinelli's essay fifteen years previously: the real role of the nationalists in the war, not so much during their evolution but as they set out. Croce, for example, tended to minimise the extent to which the nationalists conditioned the outbreak of the conflict, to the point of maintaining that after the Libyan War there was no longer any need for a nationalist party since the war had involved more or less everyone and everyone had become nationalist.[3] Many historians, however, have stressed the determining role of the nationalists, thus supporting the theory dear to the nationalists themselves: they were anxious to show that without them, the colonial enterprise would never have come about. This position was held not only by those who were culturally close to Corradini's movement, but also – perhaps particularly – by those who differed greatly from nationalist theories. Among these were certainly Carocci,[4] Torre[5] and Salvemini,[6] who "adopted the nationalist theory", according to Molinelli.

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[1] Luspio University, Rome.

[2] F. GAETA, *Il nazionalismo italiano*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1981, p. 128.

[3] B. CROCE, *Storia d'Italia dal 1871 al 1915*, Laterza, Bari, 1967, pp. 250-251.

[4] G. CAROCCI, *Giolitti e l'età giolittiana*, Einaudi, Turin, 1961, p. 147.

[5] A. TORRE, *La politica estera dell'Italia dal 1896 al 1914*, Bologna, Cappelli, 1960, p. 357.

[6] G. SALVEMINI, *Come siamo andati in Libia e altri scritti dal 1900 al 1915*, edited by A. TORRE, Feltrinelli, Milan, 1963, p. 318 ff.

And this is after all the line taken by Molinelli himself when, at the end of the essay, he says that the nationalist movement was "the main instigator of the initiative within government and within public opinion".[7]

The question raised by Molinelli is, all in all, somewhat secondary. From the analysis by Volpe[8] and the more recent ones by Gentile and Perfetti,[9] it appears evident that the nationalists' role was not so much whether to force Giolitti into war with Turkey, as the creation of a political climate going well beyond the issue of the conflict for Tripoli and thus bringing about the effective inclusion of Corradini's movement within the political struggle in Italy. In particular, Emilio Gentile maintained that "without underestimating the pressure exerted by public opinion and by economic-financial groups, there is no doubt that the reasons driving Giolitti to intervene were determined by consideration of the international political situation that called either for foreclosing the mortgage on Libya or else finally giving up any idea of conquering the last territory of Mediterranean Africa still free of the dominance or the colonial influence of the other European powers".[10]

Tripoli and the nationalists

Until 1908, the nationalist press effectively ignored the issue of Tripoli. Articles on the subject were few, occasional and specific. It is true that in its third number *Il Regno* recalled the failure to go to Tripoli when such a move had been essential, during the negotiation with France between 1899 and 1902, and for this the government was blamed.[11] Some

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[7] R. MOLINELLI, "Il nazionalismo italiano e l'impresa di Libia", *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento*, April 1966, pp. 286-318.

[8] G. VOLPE, *L'impresa di Tripoli 1911-1912*, Rome 1946, now in IBID., *L'Italia moderna 1910-1914*, Sansoni, Florence, 1973, vol. III, pp. 315-439.

[9] According to Gentile, "supporters and apologists of the initiative, the nationalists undoubtedly influenced the government's pro-war decision, which was however the decisive act of a long period of preparation", E. GENTILE, *L'Italia giolittiana. La storia e la critica,* Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1977, p. 48; see also F. PERFETTI, *Il movimento nazionalista in Italia 1903-1914*, Bonacci, Rome, 1984, p. 148.

[10] E. GENTILE, *L'Italia giolittiana 1899-1914*, *Storia dell'Italia contemporanea* directed by R. DE FELICE, II, Esi, Naples, 1977, p. 168.

[11] "Tomorrow let us talk of Tripoli," advised Corradini; "the socialists and their unlucky monkeys will howl about the dirty military job. They will howl in this way to stop the initiative, and if it is stopped today, tomorrow they will be able to repeat the jingle about non-productive outlay", E. CORRADINI, "Qualche altra parola", *Il Regno*, I, n. 3, 13. December 1903.

interest was shown for the Derna events in 1904,[12] while the question of relations with France returned in 1905.[13] It is equally true that in May 1905 the subject was touched on again in an article entitled "Tripoli" which saw Libya as the gateway for Italian penetration in Africa,[14] while in June the principles of a colonial policy in the Mediterranean were reiterated.[15] But all this seems somewhat little compared to how much the nationalists invested in Tripolitania from 1908 and especially after the Florence Congress. Also because one of the review's main topics was indeed Italian expansionism, a subject dealt with in almost every number. It is a fact that nationalist expansionism looked further afield: in particular, towards Argentina, an object of nationalist desire as it was a "free colony", meaning that its conquest would not require the use of arms but would simply come about through the numbers of Italian emigrants.[16] Or else towards the East, from Eastern Europe (the Balkans, the Aegean and Albania[17]) to the Far East, China in particular[18] (while Japan was considered with the utmost respect as an independent empire capable of making war against Tsarist Russia, and winning[19]).

The nationalists, of course, did not neglect Africa; *Il Regno* was of the opinion that Italy's presence should be determinedly reinforced in spite of (or even because of) the recent colonial defeats.[20] Irredentism itself was progressively losing its democratic character to become nothing more than the first, essential step towards expansionism.[21] However, a good deal of space was devoted to African colonial policy, the reappraisal of Crispi,

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[12] C.L., "I fatti di Derna", *Il Regno*, I, n. 36, 31. July 1904.
[13] ID., "Tripoli sepolta", *Il Regno*, II, n. 7, 12. February 1905.
[14] JUNIOR, "Tripoli", *Il Regno*, II, n. 13, 12. May 1905.
[15] F. CORTESI, "Politica mediterranea", *Il Regno*, II, n. 14, 3. June 1905.
[16] E. CORRADINI, "Un biglietto per l'espansionismo", *Il Regno*, I, n. 4, 20. December 1904; also of interest, the conference held by Corradini himself in 1909 on *L'emigrazione italiana nell'America del Sud*, in E. CORRADINI, *Discorsi politici 1902-1923*, Vallecchi, Florence, 1924, p. 71 ff. Thereafter, a good number of journalistic pieces on Argentina appeared. As an example, see G. BEVIONE, *L'Argentina*, F.lli Bocca Editori, Turin, 1911.
[17] G. NEGÙS, "Non dimentichiamo l'Albania", *Il Regno*, I, n. 14, 28. February 1904; E. PECCHIOLI, "Le condizioni della Macedonia", *Il Regno*, I, n. 18, 27. March 1904; IBID., "Corfù italiana", *Il Regno*, I, n. 57, 25. December 1904.
[18] P.L. OCCHINI, "Politica asiatica", *Il Regno*, I, n. 11, 7. February 1904; IBID., "Il mar Giallo e il mar Egeo", *Il Regno*, I, n. 13, 21. February 1904.
[19] E. CORRADINI, "La guerra", *Il Regno*, I, n. 14, 28. February 1904.
[20] G. PAPINI, "Quel che si fa in Eritrea", *Il Regno*, I, n. 12, 14. Febuary 1904.
[21] LA RIVISTA, "A proposito di irredentismo", *Il Regno*, I, n. 29, 12. June 1904.

and the need to "avenge" Adowa. In any case, not even Corradini's works contained significant references to Tripoli and Libya before 1910.

It was only during the Florentine Nationalist Congress in 1910 that expansion in Africa gained greater attention, although in a fragmented way that confirmed the many differences within the movement; but even then Libya was mentioned little and marginally.

Corradini and Federzoni represented the most decidedly expansionist line of action; they insisted on the geopolitical problem of Libya as the key with which to open up Africa to Italy's advantage. In the report that opened the Congress, "Proletarian Classes. Socialism; Proletarian Nations. Nationalism", Libya was not mentioned. Corradini spoke at length on issues regarding expansion towards Argentina and Tunisia, claiming that the state of Italian emigration would have been widely different had it still been possible to send emigrants to Tunisia.[22] It was in fact Luigi Federzoni who switched attention to the Tripoli issue: in his paper "The Policy of the Alliances" he concentrated solely on foreign policy and expressed regret at the failure to occupy Tripoli during the 1905 crisis and at the government's non-action in 1910, especially with regard to the famous declaration in which the Italian government had criticised "Turkish intangibility in Tripoli".[23]

Luigi Villari's position was in some measure different: in his paper "Nationalism and Emigration" he dealt above all with the issue of Italy's role with regard to the emigrants who were neither safeguarded nor even defended as to their language; he agreed with Corradini that Italian expansionism could solve the problem of emigration. Libya was not specifically mentioned but the conditions were laid down for Italian expansion in Africa.[24]

Scipio Sighele's position was again different; he tried to present irredentism as an aspect of nationalism, but said not a word about Libya. He would deal with the topic, as did almost all the nationalists, in 1911, in *Il nazionalismo e i partiti politici*, writing that Italy was forced to undertake an imperialist policy "for reasons of expedience", and this expedience presented itself as the Libyan question.[25]

Lastly, we must recall the position of Filippo Carli, the economist of the nationalist group; in his report "The Economic Policy of the Great

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[22] *Il nazionalismo italiano. Atti del Congresso di Firenze*, Quattrini, Florence, 1911, p. 22 ff.
[23] IBID., pp. 114 and 121.
[24] IBID., p. 178 ff.
[25] IBID., p. 80 ff.; S. SIGHELE, *Il nazionalismo e I partiti politici*, Treves, Milan, 1911, p. 86 ff.

Italy" he maintained that the possession of colonial territories (Eritrea cost the state eight million lire a year) was not as essential as having commerce flowing across Mediterranean, exporting capital and above all not having to go abroad for wheat. This was an indirect criticism of traditional colonialism, but contained not a word about Libya as the solution to the migration problem.[26] In *L'altra guerra*, Carli stated that Italian influence in the East or in the Balkans would be preferable to that in the Mediterranean, since in the *Mare nostrum* what counted was the tenure of key points such as Gibraltar, rather than Tripoli.[27]

Until December 1910, therefore, the nationalists did not in fact place much stress on Libya and the Tripoli question which at the time appeared to be just what it was, merely a foreign policy issue to be handled by the government, not the evocative myth it was to become within a few months, thanks to the nationalists themselves.

Later on the nationalists claimed merit for having turned the tide of Italian public opinion in favour of the Libyan War: Paola Maria Arcari wrote that those collaborating on *Il Regno* hoped to create a pro-Tripoli movement, yet she quoted only one article from that review in favour of a colonial future for Libya.[28]

The nationalist press exploded only in the first few months of 1911, at the time of the conflict with Turkey. There were many reasons for such a sudden reawakening of interest in the Libyan question, all touching on foreign or commercial policy. Relations with the Ottoman Empire had deteriorated due to commercial interests in Tripolitania; border negotiations were not going well, since the French tended to move frontiers in Tunisia's favour while the Anglo-Egyptians did exactly the same regarding those between Egypt and Cyrenaica. All this under the eyes of the Italian government which had previously received assurances regarding its interests in northern Africa from the powers of both the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente. Furthermore, Arab dislike of Europeans in general was on the rise, materialising in a series of attacks and other violence against Italians, as well as against Italian shipping and merchandise. Between 1906 and 1911, there were even difficulties in continuing the archaeological mission in Cyrenaica organised by the Archaeological School of Rome. The clear impression was that Libya (by now the press was calling Cyrenaica and Tripolitania by the old Roman

[26] *Il nazionalismo italiano*, cit., pp. 172-174.
[27] F. CARLI, *L'altra guerra*, Treves, Milan, 1916, pp. 246-258.
[28] P.M. ARCARI, *Le elaborazioni della dottrina politica nazionale tra l'unità e l'intervento (1870-1914)*, Casa ed. Il Marzocco, Florence, 1934-1939, II, pp. 686-687.

name) might slip away from Italy again, causing serious damage to her geopolitical position in the Mediterranean.[29]

These were the issues facing Giolitti when he returned as prime minister on March 30. 1911, a post he had abandoned in December 1909. In his memoirs, the new head of government declared that the Libyan question was the third point of his three-point programme of government: the first two (universal suffrage and the life insurance monopoly) were explicit while the third, which "has been on my mind for quite some time," was kept carefully hidden until an opportunity arrived to solve it once and for all.[30]

The memo sent by the foreign minister, Di San Giuliano, to Giolitti on July 28. 1911 was meaningful in this regard. The minister listed the reasons making conflict with Turkey, however regrettable, more or less inevitable: France's predictable disinclination to comply with the 1902 agreements; Franco-German negotiations; relations with the Triple Alliance which would improve with the solution of the Tripoli question; possible shifts in the *status quo* in the Balkans and the Adriatic; the concern that without immediate intervention, the chance would be lost. At the conclusion of this explanation, the foreign minister opined that prompt intervention was necessary in order to avoid giving the impression of a decision made under pressure from public opinion, more or less "imposed" by the press. In any case, in the minister's opinion, the Bank of Rome's policy in Tripolitania would carry more weight in the pro-intervention decision than the whole press campaign unleashed by the nationalists. About ten days later, Di San Giuliano in fact informed Giolitti that the Bank of Rome had decided to complete the transfer of its Tripolitania business to an Austro-German company of bankers, certain that this news would have an evident effect on the prime minister.[31]

The nationalist campaign bears a symbolic date marking the start of a concentrated attack by the aligned press on the Libya question: March 1.*st* 1911, the fifteenth anniversary of the Adowa defeat. On March 1.*st* 1911 the first number of *L'Idea Nazionale* appeared; this was not the official organ of the nationalists, but it represents them well. In one of the two

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[29] G. VOLPE, *L'Italia moderna*, cit., III vol., p. 316 ff.

[30] G. GIOLITTI, *Memorie della mia vita*, Treves, Milan, 1922, II vol., pp. 287-288 and particularly pp. 227-231, where we find not only a reconstruction of the diplomatic situation regarding the issue in recent years, but also a mention of the inclination Giolitti had always shown for its solution.

[31] *Dalle carte di Giovanni Giolitti. Quarant'anni di politica italiana*, III, *Dai prodromi della grande guerra al fascismo 1910-1928*, Feltrinelli, Milan, 1962, pp. 52-57.

editorials, "The Duty To Remember", the new weekly depicted the historical background behind the urgency for intervention. Four days later, *La Grande Italia* devoted its front-page article to "Adowa", which ended: "At this hour yet once more Africa calls to us: the question of Tripoli is vital. …, Nationalism today is also Africanism".

Again on March 1.*st* 1911, Gualtiero Castellini signed his preface to the book *Tunis and Tripoli*, in which he stated:

> The first of March is no longer an ending, it is a beginning. The fortune of Italy found its wings on the field of Novara; the fortune of Italy shall take wing again from the mountains of Adua.

The chapter on Tripoli was the last in the book, providing a highly topical conclusion. The conquest of Libya was first of all a geopolitical necessity:

> Shall we still describe ourselves as free and strong the day when new links shall be added to today's chain of French Corsica, French Bizerte, English Malta, Austrian Pula and Kotor, Turkish Vlorë, Greek or Turkish Crete: the links of French or German Tripoli and of German or English Benghazi?. [32]

The nationalists preferred to underline the government's shortcomings concerning any determined action on the part of Italy in Tripolitania. In spite of everything, opinion was clearly negative regarding Giolitti and the governing liberal class which was accused of poor national spirit.[33] Again, on June 29 *L'Idea Nazionale* dealt with Gastone Terreni's assassination in Tripoli in articles by Domenico Tumiati and Giuseppe Piazza. Between June and August, Corradini travelled to Tripolitania and Cyrenaica and communicated his vehement impressions to *Marzocco* and *L'Idea Nazionale*: the result was an *instant book*, *L'ora di Tripoli*, a collection of the nationalist leader's articles and conferences.[34]

Aged only a few months but alive and kicking thanks to the various newspapers and local groups pre-dating the foundation of the ANI, the nationalist movement mobilised: during those months nationalist activists put up posters and took part in conferences and demonstrations in various Italian towns both in the North and in the South, from Florence to Lucca,

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[32] G. CASTELLINI, *Tunisi e Tripoli*, Bocca ed., Milan-Rome, 1911, pp. XVI and 191.

[33] "La Tripolitania è il fulcro della politica estera italiana", *L'Idea Nazionale*, 8. March 1911.

[34] E. CORRADINI, *L'ora di Tripoli*, Treves, Milan, 1911.

from Palermo to Brescia, from Reggio Emilia to Bologna. Prezzolini's *La Voce* and Salvemini's *L'Unità* opposed this interventionist rhapsody and started a pugnacious controversy with the nationalists. But they were at a disadvantage: Prezzolini's purpose was to caution public opinion against nationalist deception, above all regarding Libya as the sort of Eldorado depicted by Corradini and his followers, and he was particularly opposed to the Tripoli campaign although not to its underlying idea of the great Italy; and the operation failed, as so often happens when a message is unclear. The proximity of Salvemini risked aligning the position of the *Voce*'s readers with that of the Socialist pacifists, and in this regard the nationalists were very clever.[35]

An expert in Argentine emigration, Giuseppe Bevione too started to publish articles on the Libyan undertaking in April, some of which later appeared in book form,[36] ceasing only with the passing of the annexation law; thanks also to Bevione's action, the nationalists moved closer to circles beyond political-cultural and industrial groups, such as traders and farmers, especially in Lombardy, who were enthusiastic about the Libyan enterprise and the possibility of obtaining state contracts through the war.

In this way *L'Idea Nazionale* was the first example of a newspaper that risked everything on the war in Libya, much more so than the ANI which did not as yet exist as a party organisation. The Association's leaders should have organised its structure in that same year of 1911, but they preferred to await the end of the Tripoli business in order to avoid drawing attention at that moment to the confrontation between democrats and imperialists which was to emerge the next year during the Rome Congress.[37]

The leadership of *L'Idea Nazionale* was formed of people who differed widely, culturally and ideologically, one from the other; from Corradini, who was then the real cultural and literary point of reference for nationalism, to Francesco Coppola, a technician in international issues who brought a geopolitical dimension to the Libyan question that others did not possess; from the flexible and skilful Luigi Federzoni, a man of the Risorgimento, the link with the irredentists and having contacts with the Crown; to Roberto Forges Davanzati, formerly a revolutionary trade unionist, one of the most fervent supporters of social imperialism and of expansion through peopling rather than exploitation; and lastly Maurizio

[35] For Prezzolini's position during these months see G. SANGIULIANO, *Giuseppe Prezzolini. L'anarchico conservatore*, Mursia, Milan, 2008, pp. 183-185. On Salvemini, see G. SALVEMINI, *op. cit.*

[36] G. BEVIONE, *Come siamo andati a Tripoli*, Bocca, Turin, 1912.

[37] F. PERFETTI, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

Maraviglia, the only person close to Maurras' French nationalism, but helpful in relations with the Catholics, a forceful, facile writer.

The nationalists' publicity campaign in favour of the war in Libya was certainly present; it was noisy enough and gave them the chance to claim later that they had given rise to the initiative. In an interview for the *Alto Adige* daily paper in September 1911, Castellini stated that even though Giolitti had been encouraged by "international factors and had not been strongly urged on by nationalist unrest, nationalism was aware that it alone had prepared public opinion spiritually for the initiative and had provided it with the needful technical information";[38] this was an important statement but also almost an admission. Corradini was more determined to highlight the crucial role of nationalism in the preface to *L'ora di Tripoli*, claiming that the nationalists in the most important editorial offices had initiated the press campaign.[39]

This observation contains a good deal of truth. The press campaign referred to by Di San Giuliano in the above-mentioned note to Giolitti was carried out by the great "pro-Tripoli" daily papers such as *La Tribuna*, *Il Giornale d'Italia* and *La Stampa*. *La Tribuna*, headed by Giolitti's friend Malagodi, started its campaign in favour of war against Turkey in November-December 1910, and was the first paper to send a special correspondent to Tripolitania in March 1911: Giuseppe Piazza who was at that time anything but nationalist, having written ironically in the paper about the nationalist congress in Florence. At the beginning of 1911 *Il Giornale d'Italia*, a Sonnino supporter, joined the pro-war chorus; then it was the turn of *La Stampa*, which sent Giuseppe Bevione, as we have mentioned.

As Franco Gaeta maintained, the nationalists' awareness campaign should not be confused with the previous one initiated in the main media:[40] the issues were different, since in the case of the daily papers the intention was to push the government into undertaking a more determined line to safeguard geopolitical interests in the Mediterranean. In the case of nationalism, it was a case of finding the classical "chance" to be taken at all costs to introduce into Italian politics elements of expansionism and *grandeur* and to underline the need of political reform with the stable rather than occasional commencement of a "reactionary" party, imperialist and definitely right-wing, yet having social features making it a total novelty on the Italian scene.

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[38] "L'occupazione di Tripoli e i nazionalisti", *Alto Adige*, 29. September 1911.
[39] E. CORRADINI, *L'ora di Tripoli*, cit., pp. VII-IX.
[40] F. GAETA, *op. cit.*, pp. 271-272.

The Libya of the nationalists

The nationalists' move went forward at two levels, and in the end proved successful: on the one hand, they chose to insist mainly on the expansionism issue, a first step in the direction of the vigorous imperialism that Italy and its governing class lacked; on the other, they made good use of the social question.

The difference between the nationalists' controversy and the daily papers' learned analyses in favour of occupation (however transitory) of Libya, was that the nationalists had placed the social question on their list of pro-intervention reasons. They had to present Libya as a new Eden in order to win over public opinion, ever suspicious of colonial wars. It was not mere superficial cunning that moved Corradini and the others to paint the "fourth shore" as a rich and easy land to conquer. It was above all the need to motivate the nation to make an effort to obtain a real gain, not only to satisfy the Italic "sacred egoism," but also to provide a valid alternative to emigration.

In Gualtiero Castellini's opinion, Tripolitania was no less fertile than Tunisia, but its output was low through the "shameful Turkish administration"; if roads were sandy, if people didn't work, if hordes of beggars were everywhere, the fault was basically that of the Turkish government which forced the unhappy population to lead such a primitive, rough life. As to the rest, Castellini continued to stress, the uplands of Cyrenaica were "one whole orchard," "the luxuriance of the flora is fantastic": of course, these recollections echoed down from Roman times as described by classic writers; the oases were rich in water and vegetation, the vines were "better than those in Tunisia," not to speak of the barley, tobacco, corn and wide open pastures.

Industry, on the other hand, was neglected, particularly the mining industry; it simply required a better, more systematic exploration of Libyan soil to procure phosphates, sulphur, precious stones, even diamonds; the collection of rubber would be easy.[41] And lastly, unable to bear Turkish domination any longer, the Arabs would welcome us with open arms.[42]

In *L'ora di Tripoli*, Corradini expressed the same line of thought, identical in content although with different undertones. The first chapter of the book was in fact a conference held in May 1911 in several parts of Italy; the nationalist leader claimed that Libya covered a million square

[41] G. CASTELLINI, *Tunisi e Tripoli*, cit., pp. 170-171.
[42] "Between Arabs and Italians no hatred exists; the two peoples hold each other in mutual esteem", IBID., p. 31.

kilometres (while in reality it was, and is, almost double that figure) and cultivable land was about half of that, approximately five hundred thousand square kilometres.[43] These few figures already showed a superficial knowledge of the future colony. Corradini also believed that Libya's agricultural products were all those existing in Italy, especially oil, corn and wine. He waxed lyrical over the Cyrenaica region: besides the produce already mentioned, there was a salt mine and mines producing sulphur, phosphates and precious materials. Temperature and climate were very similar to those in Sicily, and the opportunity for populating the area was immense. To many observations not unlike Castellini's, the leader of Italian nationalism added further reflections typical of his ideological background in which social comments emerged, regarding both the Italians (the colonisation of Libya as an antidote for emigration), and the Arabs themselves: they were ground down by the monstrous power of Turkey and would willingly exchange it for the power of Italy.[44] The chapter on "the cultivation of the desert" is more interesting; in some ways it prefigures the reflection on Libya after the First World War made by agricultural technicians such as Nallo Mazzocchi Alemanni in the overseas agrarian institute in Florence.[45]

Giuseppe Piazza's book *La nostra terra promessa. Lettere dalla Tripolitania marzo-maggio 1911* was along the same lines, as was Giuseppe Bevione's correspondence for the *Stampa* mentioned above (the latter decidedly nationalistic).

Gioacchino Volpe observed that it was a kind of propaganda that was the "fruit of quick trips and superficial reconnaissance": studies on the subject reveal that there was some truth in this but not enough to justify the "typical optimism" that had accompanied the Italians in all their colonial undertakings. Where hard facts were lacking, continued Volpe, "imagination or similarities with neighbouring regions took their place".[46]

The most potent and decisive element inducing public opinion to support the occupation of Libya was the opportunity of using the "fourth shore" to stop emigration. Here too Bevione and Corradini had their

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[43] E. Corradini, *L'ora di Tripoli*, cit., pp. 3-4. The conference title was *Proletariato, Emigrazione, Tripoli*, IBID., pp. 3-34.

[44] IBID., p. 75 ff.

[45] IBID., p. 85 ff. On the activity of agricultural technicians in Libya and on Mazzocchi Alemanni in particular, see S. MISIANI's essay, *Colonizzazione interna, riforma agraria e i borghi rurali nella biografia intellettuale di Nallo Mazzocchi Alemanni*, shortly to be published in a book edited by the *Historia agraria* review of Madrid.

[46] G. VOLPE, *L'Italia moderna*, cit., pp. 330-331.

followers. Bevione's articles on Argentina[47] conveyed the idea of a people exploited by the Argentinians and desirous of returning home should conditions be propitious: Italy, reunited with those who had left, was destined to become a great power. After a journey through Argentina and Brazil in 1908, Corradini had lamented the fact that Italians abroad tended to forget the language of their fathers and tended to integrate easily with the new country, in spite of the best efforts of the Dante Alighieri Society for the promotion of Italian language and culture.[48] Clearly the nationalists never gave a thought to the difficulties and costs involved in constructing essential infrastructures without which there was no possibility of realising their dream of those vast settlements wherein to concentrate excess population otherwise forced to emigrate.

The function of the war in Libya within Italian nationalism

Besides wondering what nationalism could bring to the Libyan undertaking in terms of publicity and propaganda, perhaps we should also wonder what the war in Libya offered from the political viewpoint and from that of the public image of Italian nationalism.

Firstly, the Libyan enterprise had a substantial influence on the domestic history of Italian nationalism. A kind of compromise had in fact been reached among conservatives, imperialists, Catholics, irredentists and liberals at the founding congress of 1910, yet early the following year the contrasts within what Volpe had called "varied Italian nationalism" were already coming to the fore. Above all with the rapid spread of the movement to organized groups, some previously existing and some arising after the Florentine congress, the heterogeneity of ANI component parts became evident[49]: the Milan groups were, for example, closer to irredentism and featured liberal-democratic positions while the Roman group was closer to "Corradinian" positions, particularly on the imperialist idea. Between Sighele, Arcari and Caroncini on the one hand, and Maraviglia, Federzoni, Corradini and Coppola on the other, different approaches became apparent which had been more or less brought together

[47] G. BEVIONE, *Argentina*, cit.
[48] E. CORRADINI, *La patria lontana*, Treves, Milan, 1910; references to the issue of Italian emigration to Argentina and Brazil can be found in ID., *Il volere d'Italia,* Perrella, Naples 1910, p. 193 ff. and above all in the speech on *L'emigrazione italiana nell'America del Sud*, in ID., *Discorsi politici (1902-1923)*, Vallecchi, Florence, 1923, p. 71 ff.
[49] F. GAETA, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-131.

at the Florentine congress. Each had made an effort to render his own position compatible with those of the others: Sighele had spoken of irredentism and imperialism as synonyms; Corradini had explicitly referred to irredentism; Federzoni had not forgotten to mention liberal, conservative and Risorgimento positions. Moreover, all agreed in wishing to avoid touching too deeply on certain sensitive topics which would undoubtedly have divided those at the congress: topics such as the debate between protectionism and liberalism in economy, the concept of imperialism and its incompatibility with democracy and with the principle of nationality, and the irredentist issue traditionally linked to the democratic current. The only point of total agreement was a strongly anti-socialist stance. It is a fact that immediately after the congress an adherence form was prepared in which all the decisions of the congress were to be undersigned, yet many participants chose to undersign only some parts of the document.[50]

However, the greatest contrast within the movement was between the democrats and liberal-democrats on the one hand, and the anti-democrats on the other. Not only did this contrast fail to subside with the war in Libya – a war which mobilised the nationalists totally and intensely from the highest echelons to grass roots – but it was exacerbated. Which is quite comprehensible, seeing that for the nationalists this war was a sort of fuse to ignite and develop the concept of imperialistic expansionism once and for all. Added to all this, in November 1911 the *Idea Nazionale* published a letter from Francesco Coppola to Charles Maurras, founder and leading spirit of *Action française*, referring to a campaign unleashed by the Jews against our participation in the war in Libya.[51] The reaction of the democrats and Jews within the ANI was immediate and the nationalist swerve towards real anti-Semitism in line with French nationalism was stressed at a political level. The ANI tried to remedy the imprudent interview, maintaining – in Coppola's words – that the reference had been to foreign Jewish finance, in that it was foreign and not that it was Jewish, adding that "for the moment" an anti-Semite campaign in Italy was nonsense.

Almost at the same time, a book by Scipio Sighele appeared which underlined that nationalism came within the determinist, democratic and positivist current: nothing could be further from the Corradian nationalism that had taken anti-positivism as its banner since the time of *Germinal* and *Marzocco*.[52] Positions could not have been more disparate. Furthermore, arguments against Sighele's theories were immediately carried forward

[50] F. PERFETTI, *op.cit.*, pp. 92-93.
[51] IBID., p. 123.
[52] S. SIGHELE, *Il nazionalismo e i partiti politici*, cit., p. 25 ff.

forcefully and harshly above all by the Roman group linked to the *Idea Nazionale* which, thanks to the war, was carrying the young movement ever more to the right. The outbreak of the colonial war, in fact, gave the issue with Sighele the form of a showdown between democrats and anti-democrats, for the very reason that in nationalist eyes the war against Turkey not only had a geopolitical role but also endowed Italian imperialism with its *incipit*.

In the Bologna convention held in May 1912, Sighele's resignation from the ANI was accepted and a new congress was planned for the following December in Rome. On that occasion, the clash between the democratic and "anti-democratic" currents came out into the open: the document of the majority advocating that the movement should refuse any relationship with the democratic parties was approved by 60% of the delegates; a second document, presented by the democrats, received the approval of little more than 20% of those present, while Paolo Arcari – a Catholic ex-hardliner who had moved closer to demo-liberal positions – proposed an intermediate document in the hope of avoiding a break-up between the two parts, but this received a little less than 20%[53]. At the closure of the Rome Congress, the democratic group, including Paolo Arcari, abandoned the movement. Two years after its foundation, therefore, the nationalist movement suffered its first split, unquestionably caused by the widely differing positions emerging in Rome, but certainly hastened by the war in course, the real significance of which the nationalists had greatly over-estimated.

Furthermore, the Libyan war increased the distance between nationalism and irredentism, since it effectively shifted the Italian expansionist perspective from the redemption of land still under Austrian rule to African colonialism. The bitter disappointment expressed by Attilio Tamaro, the nationalist from Trieste, to those who reminded him that with Tripoli Italy had achieved its goals is highly significant.[54]

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[53] All the leaders of the ANI and *Idea Nazionale* signed the document of the majority (Corradini, Federzoni, Coppola, Forges Davanzati, Castellini, Occhini and Maraviglia); the democrats' document was supported by Luigi Valli, Bernardino Varisco, Ercole Rivalta, Vincenzo Picardi and Emilio Bodrero; the third mediating document was signed by Paolo Arcari alone. On the whole issue, see F. PERFETTI, *op. cit.*, p. 138 ff. and F. GAETA, *op. cit.*, p. 135 ff.

[54] In March 1914 Attilio Tamaro, a nationalist and subsequently a Fascist diplomat, had reacted harshly to a speech made in the Chamber by the republican Salvatore Barzilai, in which the politician from Trieste "summing up foreign policy and Libya, had spoken as if Italy had now overcome its most serious international problems"; Tamaro added: "I found that infuriating since it appeared to me that a

However, the enhancement of the nationalist leaders' antidemocratic position and the progressive abandon of the issues dear to irredentism were not the only two consequences of the war in Libya on the nationalist movement. The campaign had in fact favoured colonialism through two "strong" theories: on the one hand, the Corradinian idea of nationalism as the ideology of "proletariat nations"; and, on the other, colonialism as a possible solution to the emigration problem. This brought Corradini's nationalism noticeably closer to revolutionary syndicalism.

The commencement of the relationship between the Florentine intellectual and one particular kind of syndicalism – Mario Viana's - had really begun during 1909 and had developed until the Florence congress and the disagreement over the imperialist issue. Viana had founded and directed *Il Tricolore*, the Turin nationalist paper specifically and strongly interested in syndicalism. The correspondence between Viana and Corradini formed the background for the Libyan undertaking since it highlighted Corradini's ideas on syndicalism and its revolutionary views. The theme of relations with syndicalism supporters featured in Paolo Orano's articles for the Rome weekly *La Lupa*, one of its strongest supporters being Roberto Forges Davanzati.[55]

Moreover, the war in Libya introduced geopolitics into the vocabulary and programmes of the nationalists, particularly those elements relating to Italy's role in the Mediterranean and, above all, in the Balkans which were to characterise nationalist propaganda over the following years. In this case, we are not dealing with the cultural background of Corradini or the irredentists, but with that of those who felt that Italy's political role should be directed towards imperialism. A few years later, one review in particular was to devote close attention to international politics and to Italy's political sphere: *Politica*, directed by nationalists Maurizio Maraviglia and Francesco Coppola, first published in 1919.

However, it was above all the war in Libya that allowed the nationalists to set up a new rapport with the Catholics, among the first to join the Libyan campaign. However different the motivations behind their

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deputy from Trieste should not come to such a conclusion while the irredentist problem was still open", Archive of the Ugo Spirito Foundation, *Fondo Tamaro*, *Diario*, for the date of March 10. 1914. In the diary of the historian and diplomat from Trieste, this is the only mention of the Tripoli venture between 1911 and 1914.

[55] F. PERFETTI, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-74. For a good understanding of the relationship between Corradini's nationalism and revolutionary syndicalism, it may prove helpful to see E. CORRADINI's approach in his novel *La Patria lontana*, Treves, Milan, 1910.

respective interventions – imperialistic for the nationalists, financial and religious for the Catholics – this opportunity brought the two movements closer together, at least as far as their leaders were concerned. Nationalism was not an offspring of Catholicism; indeed the Ghibelline view regarding religion as a sort of *instrumentum regni* needed by the state had prevented much contact between the nationalism of *Il Regno* and the Catholics. However, after the Rome congress mentioned above, and after the democrats had abandoned the ANI, the liberals still remained within the Association; they were to leave it at the next congress. It was at this point that the nationalists issued their anti-Masonic stipulation; this caused much distress to the liberals still present in the movement but it was the basis for an alliance with the Catholics, at least from the electoral point of view. The next year the alliance was ratified when Medici del Vascello and Federzoni were elected to parliament. The affinity between the two movements was not only due to the anti-Masonic condition which also involved those who had already left the nationalist movement, such as Paolo Arcari: formerly an uncompromising Catholic, he later moved toward liberal, national Catholicism, making the controversy against Freemasonry one of the strong points of his own political and cultural programme.[56] It was also due to the proximity between anti-class, nationalist-corporative theories and Catholic theories. A strong anti-Giolitti factor existed in all this as well, drawing Catholics such as Aquilanti and Arcari himself closer to the nationalists, with a view to the creation of a national Catholic conservative party, something that never came about.[57]

New elements introduced into the political debate by the nationalist position

The war in Libya was in no way detrimental to nationalism. The fact that Giolitti had declared and directed the war was not a problem for the nationalists even though at the time some political groups murmured that Giolitti had stolen a march on the movement by declaring war on

[56] On the figure of Paolo Arcari see G. PARLATO, *Il pensiero politico di Paolo Arcari dall'"Osservatore Cattolico" all'uscita dall'Associazione Nazionalista Italiana*, in *Atti della commemorazione del centenario della nascita del prof. Paolo Arcari*, Tirano 1979.

[57] On the Catholic turning-point at the time of the war in Libya, see L. GANAPINI, *Il nazionalismo cattolico. I cattolici e la politica estera in Italia dal 1871 al 1914,* Laterza, Bari, 1970, p. 125 ff.

Turkey.[58] On the contrary, their message was not directed only towards the war in Libya, although they had played their part through the media; their aim was to go beyond Giolitti's message by introducing at least two totally new factors into Italian politics, the function of the media and the concept of an enemy within.

Firstly, the nationalists' enormous media effort was the primary move to involve public opinion in a colonial war. Corradini's message was welcomed by a wide variety of personages thereby creating strong uniformity within public opinion for the first time.

D'Annunzio wrote the ten *Canzoni delle gesta d'oltremare* between October 1911 and March 1912;[59] syndicalism supporters in Paolo Orano's *La Lupa* sided with the nationalists regarding the Libya claims; then Teodoro Moneta, director of the *Secolo* and 1907 Nobel Peace Prize winner, the socialist reformers like Podrecca, Ferri, De Felice and Bissolati, the liberals of the *Corriere della Sera*, the futurists, Giovanni Pascoli ("the great proletariat is on the move") and Ada Negri, on humanitarian socialist positions, the republicans, the Catholics of the Bank of Rome and of *Corriere d'Italia*, and lastly the Italians abroad, at whose congress the nationalists succeeded in gaining approval for their motion on the agenda in favour of the Libyan War. It was the first time that such a mixed, highly motivated public opinion coalesced, in support of a colonial war to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of national unity. In 1914-15 public opinion would not show such a united front.

The second factor was setting up an "enemy within", a momentous move pregnant with future meaning. The "enemy within" was pictured as the "neutralist," someone more dangerous than any outside enemy and identifiable at that time with a "non Italian," or at least someone "less Italian" than those who were pro-war. Corradini believed that the value of the 1911-1912 war went well beyond the mere conquest of Libya, however important that was; it was the signal for national rebirth after decades when the idea of nation had been run down, right back to Adowa. Adowa was to be the new starting point. In his *Commemorazione della battaglia di Adua* in the book *Discorsi politici (1902-1923),*[60] Corradini pointed out that "when the news of the Adowa defeat arrived," one part of the Italian

[58] F. GAETA, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

[59] In exile in France Gabriele D'Annunzio wrote *Le canzoni delle gesta d'oltremare* between October 1911 and February 1912, soon after to be published as the fourth volume of *Laudi*, the *Merope*. This book with its ten poems is dedicated to the war in Libya: see G. D'ANNUNZIO, *Merope. Laudi del cielo del mare della terra e degli eroi. Libro quarto*, Il Vittoriale degli Italiani, 1943-XXI.

[60] E. CORRADINI, *Discorsi politici (1902-1923)*, cit., p. 249 ff.

population "shunned the Adua dead"; "the homeland closed its eyes to the Adowa dead". That depended, he claimed, on the fact that "Italy was not defeated by Abyssinia, but … by the Italians". Adowa was the victory of Italian hatreds against the Italian nation.[61] Crispi had understood this, but Crispi was opposed by "the other Italy".[62]

This was the first time that the idea of two Italies was broached, one of the two certainly less national than the other. But who was this "other Italy," the "less national" Italy? It was "all the nonentities of constituted and constitutional Italy," from

> the whole Italy of the Kingdom, of the State and of Parliament, the aristocrats' Italy, the Italy of the fat bourgeoisie with dried-up brains, the merchants, the town mayors, the university professors, the orthodox; all that Italy with only twenty-five years of existence behind it: formed without reform and without restocking, of the old cultured classes of gentlefolk from the age of foreign domination and of division, already senile.[63]

Who won on that occasion? Anarchy won: "All that could be called, in one word, the anti-nation won". The fall of Crispi was the fall of the nation. After Crispi there was no longer a nation, only nihilism. The nation was reborn in Tripoli on September 28. 1911 when the Italian government ordered the Turkish government to hand over Tripolitania. But Corradini warned that the forces opposing the nation were still present and they were internal, not external.[64] The enemies within Italy were democracy (a certain type of democracy) and socialism. *La morale della guerra* and *Democrazia e nazionalismo* (1912), also published in *Discorsi politici,*[65] underlined the types and characteristics of the enemy within that faced Italy for the first time in its half-century of life.

> This little Tripoli – wrote Corradini – granted us wonderful surprises and, though the desert remains sterile, the war proved miraculously fertile. For in Italy too there was a triumphant Beast, and until September 30 of last year, it was *the morality of the socialist man,* morality, let me hasten to add, that was not of the socialists alone but of all of you, of all of us bourgeoisie. … When all of a sudden in this tiny part of the earth, over our Italy, the opposite morality returned to reign supreme; the morality that has been the greatest worker in forty centuries of the history of peoples: the

[61] IBID., pp. 252-253.
[62] IBID., p. 253.
[63] IBID., p. 257.
[64] IBID., p. 261.
[65] IBID., p. 135 ff. and p. 151 ff.

> *morality of the soldier*. It is the law of all for nothing. The greatest sacrifice: to die; for the least reward: nothing. Morally, man cannot be more beautiful.

In the war "humanitarianism was against us"; even our own humanitarianism worked for "the sake of the Turk and the Arab, of the Tartar and the Saracen". "Against this Italy" there are also these false Italians who favour the Turk. With Tripoli the love of the homeland was born, a homeland attacked and injured.[66]

In *Nazionalismo e democrazia*, however, the issue is more complex: democracy and parasitism are synonyms, the General Confederation of Labour and international banks are always allied. Therefore, "to make it quite clear," underlined Corradini,

> we do not wish, for example, to expel the democracy that is is traitorously pro-French and which was and has always been anti Italian, from Adua to Libya, from Libya to Rhodes. We wish to expel the democracy that by proof of its foreign origin is always national outside Italy: it is pro-French, pro-Greek, pro-Chinese, and in Italy it is always anti-national.
>
> In its place we want an Italian democracy that is only pro-Italian.[67]

Such references to the internal division of the Italians form one of the greatest legacies of the war in Libya, quite apart from Corradini's opinions. The tendency to divide the Italians into those who represent the nation and those who represent the anti-nation appears even more evident in the debate between interventionism and neutralism. It was, however, to be the cipher of political struggles in Italy up to our own times, a sort of stealthy on-going war in which one side will claim the right to represent the nation, good, culture, intelligence; and the other side will be pictured as the anti-nation, evil, ignorance, stupidity.

[66] IBID., pp. 140-142.
[67] IBID., pp. 151-161.

CHAPTER IV

THE LIBYAN WAR AND ITALIAN MODERNITY: A TROUBLESOME RELATION

GIANLUCA PASTORI[1]

Se la modernità si identifica con il "nuovo" …
altrettanto moderno era il sentimento di attesa del nuovo[2]

The experience of the Libyan War (Italo-Turkish War, 1911-12) played an important role in the actual and discursive construction of the Italian national identity during the late Liberal age, and in shaping its troublesome Mediterranean dimension. The Libyan War was a key moment of transition between the Risorgimento and modern Italy. The ideological and narrative discourse that fed and supported the military effort and that shaped the policy of occupation, settlement, and incorporation of the former Ottoman *vilayet* collected and mixed some pivotal traits of the Italian "geopolitical" self-perception. The myth of Rome and of the *translatio imperii* ("transfer of rule") from Augustus to the unitary state; the social and economic similarities linking Italy to its neighbours of the "Southern shore"; the aesthetic activism of the conquest, and its difficult relation with the ideals of the Risorgimento, whose memory still operated, despite the end of the historical process. The Libyan War fits into a complex web of myths and values. At the same time, it helps to sustain it, to extend it, to

[1] Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan. The chapter draws both form and ideas from two previous presentations: *Lo specchio di Galadriel. La guerra di Libia e l'ambigua costruzione dell'identità italiana* (SeSaMO - Società per gli Studi sul Medio Oriente, 10th National Congress, "Memorie con-divise. Popoli, stati e nazioni nel Mediterraneo e in Medio Oriente", Milan, Bicocca University, 9-11 June 2011), and *Libia 1911: Una guerra della modernità?* (Congress, "La guerra di Libia (1911-1912)", Rome, LUISS University, 1-2 December 2011). The translation of the Italian sources is by the author, unless otherwise stated.

[2] E. GENTILE, *L'Apocalisse della modernità. La Grande Guerra per l'uomo nuovo*, Mondadori, Milan, 2008, p. 14.

stretch it to new areas, and to enrich it with new models, whose persistence is attested by the continuation – in the following years – of the same rhetorical structures, and of the same interpretative models, that have accompanied the war (or, at least, of a part of them).

One pivotal element is the emphasis placed on the issue of the national rebirth. This rebirth intimately connected with the idea of modernity, of "evolving into another form", of overcoming the (often cumbersome) past. Modernity had not already evolved into the menacing entity that – a few years later – World War I would have evoked. Despite the well-known evidence that the Russo-Japanese conflict (1904-05) provided about the destructive power of modern warfare, in the auspices of its supporters, the conquest of Libya would have endowed Italy not only with the rich and prosperous lands that the propaganda depicted, or with the sovereignty over a population typically sketched as brave and proud as generous and hospitable.[3] Rather, it would have produced a sort of catharsis of the "national soul", leading to the emergence of a new Italy and a new breed of Italian. This was the unfulfilled promise of the historical Risorgimento, whose supposedly "natural" evolution had been diverted – in the narrative of the events that dominated the Italian cultural landscape since the 1880s[4] – by too many uncertainties, contradictions, and domestic and international influences. For this reason, the often disappointing results of the military campaign ended up fuelling – rather than appeasing – the same sense of frustration that had prompted the intervention. In its turn, this sense of frustration made the process of elaboration of both the war in itself and the episodes that would have followed increasingly difficult, thus contributing to shaping the ambiguous relationship that – in the following decades – would have emerged between Italy and its new African possession.[5]

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[3] For a selection of (largely fictional) depictions of Libya and its people, see A. DEL BOCA, *La nostra Africa*, N. Pozza, Vicenza, 2003, pp. 179 ff., and ID., *Gli italiani in Libia*, vol. 1, *Tripoli bel suol d'amore. 1860-1922*, Mondadori, Milan, 1993 (1st ed., Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1986), pp. 55 ff. During the conflict (and, especially, after Sciara Sciat), the traditional image of the "brave and proud" Libyan tribesman dramatically changed, evolving into the stereotype of cowardice and treacherousness reflected in most of the contemporary memoirs. For some examples, see G. PASTORI, *Steel and Blood: For a Cultural History of Edged Weapons between the Late Nineteenth and the Early Twentieth Century*, in K. JONES - G. MACOLA - D. WELCH (eds), *A Cultural History of Firearms in the Age of Empire*, Ashgate, Farnham, 2013, pp. 149-62.

[4] On these aspects, see F. CAMMARANO, *Storia dell'Italia liberale*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 2011, pp. 75 ff.

[5] On the difficult relations between Italy and Libya, see G. CALCHI NOVATI, *L'Africa d'Italia. Una storia coloniale e postcoloniale*, Carocci, Rome, 2011, pp.

The ambiguous legacy of the Risorgimento

The experience and the traumas of the Risorgimento, its limits, and the domestic and international influences affecting it, left an ambiguous legacy in the collective memory of liberal Italy, a legacy that resurfaces at the main turning points of this troublesome age. Its presence and its ways of operating are evident both in the preparatory phases of the Libyan War, and in the conduct of the operations. In many – sometimes contradictory – ways it plays a central role in setting the country on the road to the conflict. In the eyes of the public, the war soon imposed as a showcase (maybe the most eminent showcase) of the political, economic, social, and technological progress that Italy had made during its first fifty years of national life. At the same time, the war imposed (in the wake of the "vitalistic" doctrines then dominating the main cultural circles) as a way of asserting the rights of the "young and dynamic" kingdom over the "old and decaying" Ottoman Empire, and over its international allies, interested proponents of a *status quo* that Italy increasingly deemed as untenable.

In this perspective, the Libyan War fits into the broader environment of Italian public life at the turn of the twentieth century, and it is intimately connected with the developments that the country's political and social system was experiencing. In this period, the selective memory of the Risorgimento had evolved into a tool to overcome what many people perceived as the dangerous limits of a governmental action labelled as "pedestrian and lacking in imagination," and to complete a process of nation building that was seen at best as partial and largely unfinished. The war fostered, on the one hand, the emergence of those political and cultural forces that – with their often provocative gestures, their ruptures, the vociferous activism, and a violently aggressive rhetoric – would have played a key role in reshaping the public space in a more explicitly conservative form. On the other hand, the war contributed in blending the fulfilment of the expectations of the Risorgimento with the promise of a new and "higher" phase of the national history, focused on the rhetoric of the "Grande Italia" ("Greater Italy"), and on the redefinition of the country's international profile through a new, partly artificial and largely mythologised, Mediterranean dimension.[6]

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121 ff. On Libya as "guilty conscience" of Italy, see N. LABANCA, "The Embarrassment of Libya. History, Memory, and Politics in Contemporary Italy", *California Italian Studies Journal*, n. 1, 2010, at: http://escholarship.org/uc/item/9z63v86n.

[6] E. GENTILE, *La Grande Italia. Il mito della nazione nel XX secolo*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 2006. On the relations between Libyan war and Italy's Mediterranean

Since the very beginning, the relations between Italy and Libya were burdened by heavy expectations. In the political and cultural atmosphere where the campaign ripened, the conquest of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica was regarded as the seal of the nation building process, and the ratification of the completion of its first stage: the pursuit of the "great power" status. By virtue of this, the war would have projected the Kingdom of Italy toward its highest destiny. Fifty years after its official proclamation, the war offered to the fledgling country the prospect of an unexpected palingenesis, to heal its main weakness: the structural inability to forge – together with a strong, unified state, finally worth its historical traditions – a new kind of citizen, if necessary through the sometimes advocated "tepid, smouldering, bath of black blood".[7] In this sense too, the end of the "forward push" of the Risorgimento, together with the dissatisfaction for its outcomes, plays an important role in nurturing the climate of both expectation and discontent preceding and accompanying the decision to enter into war. The Libyan War was not only the product of a more-than-thirty-years-long diplomatic effort. This effort had started after the sobering experience of the Congress of Berlin (1878) and of the loss of Tunisia to France (Treaty of Bardo, 1881), and had been carried out – amid ups and downs – from all the governments following one another, between 1882 and 1911. The war was, above all, a test of political and military power, whose success was intended to consolidate Italy's position ("the smallest among the greats [powers] and the greatest among the smalls", according to the well-known definition by Gaetano Salvemini) in the small "club" of the main international actors.[8]

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identity, see S. TRINCHESE (ed), *Mare nostrum. Percezione ottomana e mito mediterraneo in Italia all'alba del '900*, Guerini, Milan, 2005.

[7] S. LEVIS SULLAM, *Il primo "tiepido, fumante bagno di sangue nero". Note sulla cultura di guerra dell'Italia liberale (1870-1911)*, in P. DEL NEGRO - E. FRANCIA (eds), *Guerre e culture di guerra nella storia d'Italia*, Unicopli, Milan, 2011, pp. 81-94. More extensively, see *Gli italiani in guerra. Conflitti identità e memorie dal Risorgimento ai nostri giorni*, vol. 2, *Le "Tre Italie": dalla presa di Roma alla Settimana Rossa (1870-1914)*, ed. by M. ISNENGHI and S. LEVIS SULLAM, Utet, Turin, 2009. On the (re)building of the Italian "national memory" before and during the Risorgimento, see A.M. BANTI - A. CHIAVISTELLI - L. MANNORI - M. MERIGGI (eds), *Atlante culturale del Risorgimento. Lessico e linguaggio politico dal Settecento all'Unità*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 2011.

[8] On these aspects, see F. MALGERI, *La guerra libica (1911-1912)*, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Rome, 1970; see also S. ROMANO, *La quarta sponda. La guerra di Libia, 1911-1912*, (1977), Longanesi, Milan, 2005, and, more recently, N. LABANCA, *La guerra italiana per la Libia, 1911-1931*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2012.

Behind the Libyan experience lay as filigree the Italian ambitions for an enlargement of its interests and its sphere of influence in the Adriatic, the eastern Mediterranean, and the Balkans, and for the revival, in these regions, of the competition with Austria-Hungary. Despite regular proclamations and soothing gestures, and despite the stipulation (1882) and the regular renewals (1887, 1891, 1896, 1902, 1912) of the Triple Alliance, Rome and Vienna never reached a true equilibrium. The defeat of Adowa (1 March 1896), closed the long "age of Crispi," and the prevalence of the "pro-German party" within the parliament. The ensuing "crisis of the alliances" and the beginning of the policy of "having little waltzes" with (former) rival powers, impressed a sharp change of course ("un colpo di timone", in the words of the then foreign minister, Emilio Visconti Venosta) to the Italian foreign policy. Moreover, it opened new room for action, limiting the country's dangerous dependence from a bond, which – in previous years – had grown increasingly invasive. Under Francesco Crispi, the Triple Alliance had imposed as "a total Alliance … a tool for active policy also in the sectors not covered by the Alliance [itself], such as East Africa".[9] No wonder that, at the beginning of "Giolitti's decade" (1903-14), the *entente* between Russia and Austria on Macedonia (Convention of Mürzsteg, 1903) – apparently confirming the convergence of the interests of the two conservative Courts outlined in the Balkan Agreements of 1897 – widened the existing rifts between Rome and Vienna. In the following years, the relations between Italy and Austria would have entered a phase of gradual deterioration, partly due to the emergence of a more aggressive irredentism on the Italian side, partly due to the revival of the dormant fears of the Imperial and Royal Army, and of the most pro-Slavic components of the Hapsburg administration.[10]

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[9] "Alleanza *totale, cioè valida come strumento di politica attiva anche nei settori non previsti dall'alleanza* [stessa]*, come l'Africa orientale*", E. SERRA, *L'Italia e le grandi alleanze nel tempo dell'imperialismo. Saggio di tecnica diplomatica. 1870-1915*, F. Angeli, Milan, 1990, p. 73 (Italics in original).

[10] On the evolution of the Hapsburg's national policy, and on the role of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand (1863-1914) in promoting the interest of the Slav component of the monarchy, see A.J. MAY, *The Hapsburg Monarchy, 1867-1914*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1968; see also A.J.P. TAYLOR, *The Hapsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1948. On the anti-Italian attitude of the Austro-Hungarian military establishment (especially the Chief of General Staff, General Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf), see G.E. ROTHENBERG, *The Army of Francis Joseph*, Purdue University Press, West Lafayette, IN, 1976, and L. SONDHAUS, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse*, Humanities Press, Boston, MA, 2000. On the impact of the Convention of Mürzsteg on the relations between Italy and Austria, see G. GIORDANO, *Tra marsine e*

Rational calculations and irrational ambitions, thus, converged and supported each other in pushing Italy towards the war. According to the prevailing ideology, this was perceived (and presented) as the purest expression of the country's "lifeblood". The same lifeblood that had nurtured and fuelled the experience of the Risorgimento, and that – after its exhaustion – had been progressively harnessed in the straitjacket of everyday politics.[11] Giovanni Giolitti's "neo-transformist" strategy was considered too far from the true ambitions of the country, too much detached from its core interests, and lacking the moral inspiration needed "to restore whose who have lost enthusiasm for any idea lying beyond the horizon of their own petty interests".[12] In this perspective, although the war did not really enjoy a broad-based popular support,[13] it cannot be reduced to the sole desire of the economic and financial actors operating in the two *vilayets*, and through whose action the government deluded itself, for a certain time, to be able to pursue a policy of gradual and peaceful penetration.[14]

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stiffelius. Venticinque anni di politica estera italiana. 1900-1925, Nuova Cultura, Rome, 2012, chapters 2 and 3.

[11] On the role of "vitalism" in the Italian cultural landscape at the beginning of the twentieth century, see R. VILLARI, *Notturno italiano. L'esordio inquieto del Novecento*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 2011. On the Libyan War as opposition between the "young" Italy and the "old" Ottoman Empire, see C. LAPWORTH, *Tripoli and the Young Italy*, Stephen Swift & Co., London, 1912.

[12] S. SIGHELE, *Pagine nazionaliste*, F.lli Treves, Milan, 1910, p. xi.

[13] On the literary dimension of the Libyan War, see A. SCHIAVULLI (ed), *Il dibattito dei letterati italiani sull'impresa di Libia (1911-1912)*, Pozzi, Ravenna, 2009. On the lower classes and their perception of the war, see S. BONO (ed), *Morire per questi deserti. Lettere di soldati italiani dal fronte libico, 1911-1912*, Abramo, Catanzaro, 1992; see also ID. (ed), *Tripoli bel suol d'amore: Testimonianze sulla guerra italo-libica*, Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, Rome, 2005. A contemporary source is B. BACCI, *La guerra libica descritta nelle lettere dei combattenti*, Bemporad, Florence, 1912. An officer's point of view is in M. CRICCO, *La battaglia di Zanzur dell'8 giugno 1912 nell'inedita testimonianza del tenente Domenico Orsini*, in *Atti del X convegno della Società per gli Studi sul Medio Oriente: "Memorie con-divise. Popoli, stati e nazioni nel Mediterraneo e in Medio Oriente", Milano, Università Bicocca, 9-11 giugno 2011*, Milan, *in press*.

[14] One the politics of peaceful penetration, and its role in the agenda of minister Di San Giuliano, see G. FERRAIOLI, *Politica e diplomazia in Italia tra il XIX e XX secolo. Vita di Antonino di San Giuliano (1852-1914)*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2007. More briefly, see ID., *La Libia nella politica estera di Antonino di San Giuliano*, in TRINCHESE, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-98. On the logic of the politics of peaceful penetration, see (despite its limits) the remarks by R.A. WEBSTER, *L'imperialismo industriale italiano. 1908-1915. Studio sul prefascismo*, Einaudi, Turin, 1974. On the role of Banco di Roma (one of the war main supporters), see

"Italy is not going; it is returning"

The issue of the return is another key element of the Libyan War. The opinion that Italy, in Libya, was "not going, but returning" was intimately linked to the discourse on the "Fourth Shore", and to the nationalist re-elaboration of the concept of *Latinitas* (Latinity). The "myth of the return" was a recurring *topos* in both written and illustrated propaganda, and invoked memories of "imperial greatness" that conferred a further moral sanction to conquest. Occupation and colonisation merged into the re-appropriation of a land that owed its same existence to the life-giving experience of the Roman domination. On the eve of the conquest, the Roman heritage, through its remains, continued to feed the life of the *vilayets*. Roman were the wells where people drew water, unaware that "with their wrinkled ropes, they wear out their rims ... that open, like smiles of challenge and victory, where the legions have passed".[15] Roman were the statues that – defaced – decorated the villas of the Ottoman officials. Roman were the remains of the monuments that marked the territory, scoring through their presence the previous presence of Italy, and transforming its successors into abusive squatters, illegitimately living on a foreign property.

> Rome quenches the thirst of the Bedouin wandering through the desert; Rome gives the stones to grind the grain or to soak the olives; Rome, the hundreds of columns to the mosques; Rome, the precious marbles to the palaces of the Beys...Those tattered Bedouins, whose ropes cut deep the stone, drawing water with buckets made of skin stolen from goats; those Turkish soldiers, who threw that water in the troughs to quench their horses, all appeared to me as travellers, dying on a land that was not theirs; and I confused the water and the stones, and the graves dug into the rocks, in a single cry of possession and recognition.[16]

L. DE ROSA - G. DE ROSA, *Storia del Banco di Roma*, 3 vols, Banco di Roma, Rome, 1982-84.

[15] D. TUMIATI, *Nell'Africa romana. Tripolitania*, F.lli Treves, Milano, 1905, p. 219. The book was reprinted several times (e.g., in 1911 and 1928), imposing, on the eve of the conquest, as an important point of reference "for the public opinion and the studious and patriotic youth", *L'illustrazione italiana*, vol. 38 (1911), n. 40, p. iv.

[16] "Roma abbevera il beduino errante del deserto; Roma gli dona le pietre per macinare il grano o macerare le olive; Roma, le centinaia di colonne alle moschee; Roma i marmi preziosi alle reggie [*sic*] dei Bey … Quei beduini laceri, che segavano con le corde la pietra viva, per attinger l'acqua in secchi di pelle rubati alle capre; quei soldati turchi che gettavano l'acqua nei truogoli per dissetare i

Rome and the Roman heritage stand in sharp contrast with a people "living day by day, waiting for the fatal unfolding of the events". These people "will always ignore the sources where the Roman genius drew". They "just scratch the first reddish soil". They "strip the land of its trees to arrange makeshift huts that the wind sweeps away or to feed the fire of one day; [they] tend their flocks because [the flocks] give the indispensable to the existence with the minimum effort". In a nutshell, "their major work is waiting for the natural favours", while "creating for the eternity – this deeply Roman formula, will never have a meaning" for them.[17] The Roman heritage did not legitimate the conquest only through its material and cultural heritage, but also with its turning the value of land to better account. "The Roman aqueduct of Imzara, if rebuilt, could irrigate the whole vilayet."[18] In the same way, the work of the Italian peasants (biological and moral heirs of the Roman settlers) became the driving force that, in contrast to the "quiet indolence of the Arabs", could revive a country whose richness only expected to be unearthed. "A vast region that, due to the work of our ancestors, was rich in water and crops, and verdant of trees and gardens; and that now, since long time, due to the laziness of a nomadic and slothful people, is largely a desert".[19]

To a certain extent, this attitude seems to be anticipating a theme that would have emerged during the "radiant days of May" (1915) leading Italy into World War I. On this occasion too, the revival, re-reading, and reconstruction of the Roman heritage (in the sense that Hobsbawm and Ranger expressed when talking about the "invention of tradition"[20]) played a pivotal role in supporting national ambitions on the Adriatic and its eastern shores, and in conveying them in forms and terms both morally and historically legitimated. On this occasion, the *Latinitas* somehow mixed with the recovery of a "Venetian" memory nourished by the theme of the "martyr Republic", sacrificed to the *raison d'état* in 1797 (by the Austro-

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cavalli, mi apparvero come viandanti moribondi in terra non propria; e confusi l'acqua e le pietre e le tombe scavate nel sasso, in un grido solo di possesso e di riconoscimento", TUMIATI, *op. cit*., p. 219.

[17] IBID., pp. 76 e 219.

[18] IBID., p. 76.

[19] "Una vasta regione che già per opera dei nostri progenitori fu abbondevole d'acque e di messi, e verdeggiante d'alberi e giardini; e ora, da un pezzo, per l'inerzia di popolazioni nomadi e neghittose, è per gran parte un deserto", G. PASCOLI, *La grande proletaria si è mossa... Discorso tenuto a Barga "per i nostri morti e feriti"*, N. Zanichelli, Bologna, 1911, p. 9.

[20] E.J. HOBSBAWM - T. RANGER (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983.

French treaty of Campoformio), in 1848-49 (by the Austrian crushing of the new Republic of San Marco) and in 1859 (by the Austro-French armistice of Villafranca). In the interventionist propaganda, an almost unbroken thread tied Roman and Venetian dominations, making the region almost "naturally" Italian. Rome – "well ahead of Eugène de Beauharnais" – demarcated the "limits of Italy" ("le chiuse d'Italia") "atop the mountains separating the waters of the Black Sea from the Adriatic".[21] In the same way, Venice (true heir of the Roman tradition, even in its naughty side), at the beginning of its eastward expansion, repeated "towards the Slavs ... what the Romans did to the Illyrians", attacking them militarily "to achieve their economic and civic purpose".[22] If – formally – the author refuses "to apply also to this fact the specious explanation that Venetians acted on behalf of a superior civilisation", the conclusion remains. "If ... we do not forget geography, we will see that very probably Romans and Venetians did nothing but to obey the natural law, which created the overall superiority of the Western Coast over the Eastern".[23]

A complex interweaving linked the Libyan War to the multifaceted world of irredentism, especially to its most openly nationalist declinations. From the very beginning, the colonial mirage exerted a dual function in the Italian political and cultural landscape. On the one hand, it represented a politically acceptable replacement of anti-Austrian sentiments that, after the country's accession to the Triple Alliance, were officially banned from public discourse. On the other, it was perceived as a privileged tool to achieve a "great power" status that founded its basis and legitimisation in the completion of the process of national unification. For Italy, as Britain and France, the possession of an overseas empire became – with a certain degree of simplification – the final proof of the country's weight on the international arena.

The Fascist symbolic discourse moves into substantial continuity with the Liberal experience, pushing its assumption to the extreme, in both form and content.[24] It devoted a pervasive attention to the ancient Rome;

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[21] A. TAMARO, *Il confine orientale d'Italia e le chiuse segnate da Roma*, in ID., *L'Adriatico - Golfo d'Italia. L'italianità di Trieste*, F.lli Treves, Milan, 1915, pp. 3-11 (5).

[22] ***, *L'Adriatico. Studio geografico, storico e politico*, F.lli Treves, Milan, 1915, p. 112.

[23] IBID.

[24] On the role of Rome and the Roman heritage in shaping Fascism's political imaginary, see J. NELIS, "Constructing Fascist Identity: Benito Mussolini and the Myth of Romanità", *Classical World*, vol. 100 (2007), n. 4, pp. 391-415, and C. FOGU, *The Historic Imaginary: Politics of History in Fascist Italy*, University of

placed a special emphasis on the demographic dynamism as power factor ("Il numero è Potenza," "The number is power"); the reference to Tripolitania and Cyrenaica as Italy's "Fourth Shore" became a constant, as well as the reference to Italy as an "imperial power". The relation that Fascism defined between Italy and Libya went above over the mere idea of colonisation and, in many ways, over that of colonialism, at least insofar colonialism involves – even in its "intricate and fractured" nature – the presence of a structural tension between core and periphery, implied in the definition of imposition of a foreign power on a population.[25] Both legally and conceptually, fascist Libya was not a colony. Rather, it was a projection of Italy overseas, whose nature depended – as well as on the military conquest (and re-conquest) – on the force of the tradition, culture and heritage, embedded in its material endowment, and proposed as a founding moment of its historical identity. It is from this vision that emerged Libya's peculiar character and stem its equally peculiar rules, which were different from those in force in the other Italian possessions, first of all, in the historical colony of Eritrea. The presence of a Libyan native identity preceding Italian colonisation lacked any relevance, and the Libyan population was considered a negligible entity, both as a political and cultural element. The reduction of the ethnic problem to a mere Arab/Turkish opposition is just one example of the way in which the colonial discourse oversimplified the intricate Libyan situation. It was a voluntary reductionism, which expressed, on the one hand, the poor knowledge existing at the beginning of the campaign, and on the other hand, that sharply contrasts with the acquisitions made since the very early months of the occupation.

Toronto Press, Toronto, 2003. On the political exploitation of Libya's archaeological heritage, and the evolution of this strategy in the transition from Liberalism to Fascism, see S. ALTEKAMP, *Italian Colonial Archaeology in Libya 1912-1942*, in M.L. GALATY - C. WATKINSON (eds), *Archaeology under Dictatorship*, Springer, New York, 2004, pp. 55-71, M. MUNZI, *Italian Archaeology in Libya. From Colonial Romanità to Decolonization of the Past*, Ibid., pp. 73-107, and ID., *L'epica del ritorno: archeologia e politica nella Tripolitania italiana*, L'"Erma" di Bretschneider, Rome, 2001.

[25] For a wide and provocative analysis of the concept of colonisation and its relations with the imperial dimension, see J. HART, *Empires and Colonies*, Polity Press, Cambridge-Malden, MA, 2008. On the concept of empire and its implications, see also H. MÜNKLER, *Imperien. Die Logik der Weltherrschaft - vom Alten Rom bis zu den Vereinigten Staaten*, Rowohlt, Berlin, 2005.

Italy and Libya, between ambition and frustration

The "totalitarian dream" of building a "fascist Italy" in Libya too, seems thus to reflect a series of long-term dynamics, not entirely different from those involved in the revision of the experience of the Risorgimento during the first fifty years of Italy's national life. Another element of this process was the reduction of the Risorgimento to its monarchic and military dimension. The relationship between the Crown and the Risorgimento was complex, not linear, and radically different from the holographic and "consensual" image that affirmed in the first unitary years.[26] The relationship between the Risorgimento the military establishment is equally complex. On the one hand, the almost natural bond existing between Crown and army made national unification a largely shared project. On the other hand, the relationship between the army and the most "popular," "spontaneous," and "republican" aspect of the process had been problematic since its very beginning. The ups and downs of the relation between Garibaldi and his "colleagues" of the regular army, and the experience of the disbandment of the "Southern Army" after 1860, with its "political will of marginalisation and dismantling," are just two examples of this state of things.[27] After the "heroic" parenthesis of the Second War of Independence, and the "unfortunate" page of the Third (when the defeats of Custoza and Lissa were only partially redeemed, in a deeply embarrassing way, from the success of Garibaldi at Bezzecca), the history of the relationship between the army and civil society became a history of gradual estrangement. The role that the army played in the suppression of the riots of 1898, and the support that it offered in the following (overestimated) attempts of "authoritarian restoration" were only the most glaring aspects of a larger and deeper trend. Many things had changed from an age in which, after the

[26] On the relations between Risorgimento and the Italian monarchy, see (briefly) F. MAZZONIS, *La Monarchia e il Risorgimento*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2003. On two aspects of the "compacting" of the experience of the Risorgimento on its "monarchic core", see B. TOBIA, *Una patria per gli Italiani. Spazi, itinerari e monumenti nell'Italia unita (1870-1900)*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1991, and I. PORCIANI, *La festa della nazione. Rappresentazione dello Stato e spazi sociali nell'Italia unita*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1997.

[27] On the relation between Garibaldi and the Italian military establishment during and after the expedition of the "Thousands", see E. CECCHINATO, *Camicie rosse. I garibaldini dell'Unità alla Grande Guerra*, (2007), Laterza, Rome-Bari, 2011; for the quotation, see p. 20; on the disbandment of the "Southern Army", see F. MOLFESE, "Lo scioglimento dell'esercito meridionale garibaldino", *Nuova Rivista Storica*, vol. 44 (1960), n. 1, pp. 1-53.

reforms of General Ricotti (1870-76), the army was "the iron wire which had sewn Italy together and keeps it united".[28]

> In the Army ... it was only natural that, if the farmer's son became a good private, the son of the land agent became a good corporal, and the son of the bailiff, of the land owner, or of the engineer a good sergeant (later, a good second lieutenant), since the moral and social hierarchies reflected (and recreated) the military hierarchies … The transformation that followed [the defeats of] Custoza, [and] Lissa, and the Prussian military successes, vehemently pushed a share of the liberal elite toward an authoritarian vision of the Nation in Arms, irresistibly moving the "vector of the values" from the army [itself] to the society, to be nationalised according to the order that the military hierarchy provided.[29]

The Libyan campaign had been conceived as a traditional nineteenth century "military promenade". The rivalries that soon emerged between army and navy – and that forced the prime minister, Giolitti, and the foreign minister, Marquis Di San Giuliano, to intervene to stop them – were a clear sign of the ambitions of a service (the navy) deemed, at that time, as "the most modern and the most efficient among the Italian tools of war".[30]

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[28] Luigi Settembrini, quoted in A.M. BANTI - M. MONDINI, *Da Novara a Custoza: culture militari e discorso nazionale tra Risorgimento e Unità*, in *Storia d'Italia. Annali*, vol. 18, *Guerra e pace*, ed. by W. BARBERIS, Einaudi, Turin, 2002, pp. 417-62 (461). On General Ricotti's reforms, see V. ILARI, *Storia del servizio militare in Italia*, vol. 2, *La "Nazione Armata" (1871-1918)*, Centro Militare di Studi Strategici, Rome, 1990, pp. 91 ff; see also V. GALLINARI, "Le riforme militari di Cesare Ricotti", *Memorie Storico-Militari*, Rome, 1978, pp. 11-33, and N. LABANCA, *Il generale Cesare Ricotti e la politica militare italiana dal 1884 al 1887*, Ufficio Storico dello Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito, Rome, 1986.

[29] "[N]ell'esercito … era naturale che, se il figlio del contadino diventava un buon soldato, il figlio del castaldo divenisse un buon caporale e quello del fattore, del proprietario o dell'ingegnere un buon sergente (e, più avanti, un buon sottotenente), giacché le gerarchie morali e sociali rispecchiavano (e ricreavano) quelle militari … La trasformazione dopo Custoza, Lissa e i fasti bellici prussiani spingeva con forza una parte significativa delle classi dirigenti liberali verso una concezione autoritaria della nazione in armi, in cui il vettore valoriale si muoveva, irresistibilmente, dall'esercito a una società da nazionalizzare secondo l'ordine delle gerarchie militari", Paulo Fambri, quoted in BANTI AND MONDINI, *op. cit*., pp. 461-62.

[30] DEL BOCA, *Gli italiani*, p. 97. For the official account of the Italian navy's role during the Libyan War, see *La Marina nella guerra italo-turca*, Ministero della Marina, Rome, 1912. For a critical analysis, see M. GABRIELE, *La Marina nella guerra italo-turca. Il potere marittimo strumento militare e politico*, *1911-1912*, Ufficio Storico della Marina Militare, Rome, 1998.

The military effort that Italy undertook went in the same direction. The expeditionary force (two infantry divisions combined into a Special Army Corps) consisted of two Bersaglieri [light infantry] regiments, one field artillery regiment, one artillery regiment, two garrison artillery companies, three sapper companies, two cavalry squadrons, and one signal company. The total strength – including logistic and medical supports, partly provided through the mobilisation of the national Red Cross Association – was of 34,000 men, 72 guns of different calibres, and four radio stations.[31] The war saw the first tactical use of aircraft and armoured cars, the first use, in the Italian army, of modern machine guns, and a large-scale recourse to wireless telegraphy. Moreover, Italian troops developed and applied (albeit with little success) their first counterinsurgency doctrines, partly based on the lessons learned in East Africa, partly on an international literature then evolving, following the transition from a "traditional" model of colonial warfare to more modern forms of asymmetric confrontation.[32]

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[31] For a list of the units of the Special Army Corps ("Corpo d'Armata Speciale"), see COMANDO DEL CORPO DI STATO MAGGIORE, UFFICIO COLONIALE, *L'azione dell'esercito italiano nella guerra italo-turca (1911-1912)*, Ufficio Storico dello Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito, Rome, 1913, p. 9. See p. 11, for a list of the mobilized units between mid-October and December 1911 (seven infantry brigades and one infantry regiment, six Alpini [mountain infantry] battalions, one Bersaglieri regiment, eight cavalry squadrons, twenty-five artillery batteries of different kind, seven garrison artillery companies, engineers, sanitary, and support troops, for a total of 55,000 men and 154 guns of different calibre), and between January and October 1912 (four Alpini battalions, seven Ascari [native troops] battalions from Eritrea, and one Meharisti [camel mounted troops] squadron). On 31 May, 1912, the total strength of the Italian troops in Libya was twenty-three infantry regiments, three Bersaglieri regiments, ten Alpini battalions, ten cavalry squadrons, seven Ascari battalions from Eritrea, forty-four artillery batteries (of whom, eleven mountain artillery batteries), ten garrison artillery companies and eighteen engineer companies, plus the logistic units. On August 15, the Italian presence numbered 97,000 men, and on November 15, 100,000. They started declining only in 1913, reaching 50.000 men in July 1914.

[32] On air power, see *Cronistoria dell'Aeronautica militare italiana*, vols. 3-5, (1928), Ufficio Storico dell'Aeronautica Militare, Rome, 1989; see also F. PEDRIALI, *L'aeronautica italiana nelle guerre coloniali. Libia 1911-1936. Dallo sbarco a Tripoli al Governatorato Balbo*, Ufficio Storico dell'Aeronautica Militare, Rome, 2008. On the colonial campaigns, see C.C. CALLWELL, *Small Wars. Their Principles and Practice*, (1906), University of Nebraska Press, London-Lincoln, NE, 1996, and R.B. BRUCE *ET AL.*, *Fighting Techniques of the Imperial Age. 1776-1914. Equipment, Combat Skills and Tactics*, Amber Books, London, 2009. On the Italian counterinsurgency in Libya, see F. SAINI FASANOTTI, *Libia*

Ça va sans dire, this rhetoric construction depicted only part of the events. Behind the explosions of patriotic enthusiasm, a deep cleavage separated "real" country and "official" country, as well as political forces from each other.[33] The general feeling was, nonetheless, that the war could play a positive role. The failure of the policy of peaceful penetration carried out by Marquis Di San Giuliano had opened, in the eyes of a new, potential ruling class, a long coveted window of opportunity. The military too, hoped to seize in Libya an easy success. According to a widespread opinion, local population was supportive of a possible Italian rule. At the same time, the war would have brought the prestige of a campaign waged against an enemy – the Turkish army – considered "as any other European army", but supposedly backed by a government ready to "give up" "as soon as it could be done with some dignity".[34]

1922-1931. Le operazioni militari italiane, Ufficio Storico dello Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito, Rome, 2012, spec. pp. 45 ff.

[33] For a sketch of the Italian social and political landscape at the time of the Libyan War, see L. GOGLIA - F. GRASSI, *Il colonialismo italiano da Adua all'Impero*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1981, pp. 139 ff. On the Socialist Party, see M. DEGL'INNOCENTI, *Il socialismo italiano e la guerra di Libia*, Editori Riuniti, Rome, 1976; on the Catholics, see C. FILESI, *La guerra di Libia e la stampa d'ispirazione vaticana*, Università di Cagliari, *Annali della Facoltà di Scienze Politiche*, vol. 8 (1982-83), pp. 165-210. See also R. RAINERO, *Paolo Valera e l'opposizione democratica all'Impresa di Tripoli*, L'"Erma" di Bretschneider, Rome, 1983; M. TESORO, "Stampa e opinione pubblica in Italia al tempo della guerra con l'impero ottomano", *Il Politico*, vol. 55 (1990), n. 4, pp. 713-32; and G. SALE, *Libia 1911. I cattolici, la Santa Sede e l'impresa coloniale italiana*, Jaca Book, Milan, 2011. On the propaganda, see M. PINCHERLE, "La preparazione dell'opinione all'impresa pubblica di Libia", *Rassegna Storica del Risorgimento Italiano*, vol. 56 (1969), n. 3, pp. 450-82. On the "folkloric" aspects of the war, see P. MALTESE, *La terra promessa. La guerra italo-turca e la conquista della Libia, 1911-1912*, Sugar, Milan, 1968.

[34] L. CADORNA, *Lettere familiari*, Mondadori, Milan, 1967, in GOGLIA AND GRASSI, *op. cit.* p. 159; on the value of the Turkish army, see CORPO DI STATO MAGGIORE, *Manuale dell'ufficiale in Tripolitania*, quoted in GOGLIA AND GRASSI, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-63. Tentatively, the strength of the Ottoman troops in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica can be assessed in some 4,200 men, plus some hundred constabularies (some 1,500 men), and an unknown number of irregular militia (*mehalla*). The strength of these *mehalla* has been assessed to number some 3,000 men, but figures vary widely. At a certain point, the Italian General Staff referred to some 10,000 of them in the Tripoli area alone. Their operational value was, however, poor. In 1913, the same Italian General Staff referred (retrospectively) to a Turkish presence in the *vilayets* of 5,000 (Tripolitania) and 2,000 (Cyrenaica) men respectively, observing that, at that time, "the effort to establish Arab *redifs* [reserve troops]"

The failure to achieve these expectations proved no less disappointing than the failure to gain the material benefits of the conquest. In 1929, tracing a profile of the Italian army at the beginning of World War I, and reflecting on what he labelled the positive aspects of the Libyan War, General Felice de Chaurand de Saint Eustache (who commanded the Third Special Division in Tripoli, in November 1911) put the point in an especially blunt way. "The events of that campaign ... had not enough impact on the country to produce a profound re-awakening of its populations, unnerved by a long peace, and made inert by humanitarian and pacifist doctrines".

> After closing the Libyan parenthesis – or so believed Mr. Giolitti – he returned to his pedestrian policy, shunning every ideal, aiming only at linking the interests of the bourgeoisie with the rights of the proletariat, persevering in the respect of that freedom of assembly, association, press, and strike that, if it had made possible a substantial economic improvement of the working class, also contributed in distorting the character of an industrious people, and in shaking their confidence in the future, due to the continuous populist perturbations.[35]

The "betrayal" of the Arab population; the contested memory of Sciara Sciat, its meaning, and its reasons;[36] the human and material losses; the appalling unpreparedness of the ground forces; the rivalries between ser-

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could be "considered aborted", COMANDO DEL CORPO DI STATO MAGGIORE, UFFICIO COLONIALE, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

[35] "Chiusa la parentesi libica – o almeno così reputava l'on. Giolitti – egli tornò alla sua politica pedestre, rifuggente da ogni ideale, intenta soltanto ad associare gli interessi della borghesia con i diritti del proletariato, perseverando nel rispetto di quella libertà di riunione, di associazione, di stampa e di sciopero, che, se aveva reso possibile un notevole elevamento economico delle classi operaie, contribuì anche a falsare il carattere di un popolo laborioso, ed a scuoterne la fiducia nel suo avvenire, per le continue perturbazioni demagogiche", F. DE CHAURAND DE SAINT EUSTACHE, *Come l'esercito italiano entrò in guerra*, Mondadori, Milan, 1929, pp. 227-29. From his Libyan experience, de Chaurand had drawn also the volume *Gli insegnamenti tattici della guerra italo-turca e l'addestramento delle truppe a la battaglia*, F. Casanova & C.,Turin, 1914.

[36] On Sciara Sciat, see L. DEL FRA, *Sciara Sciat. Genocidio nell'oasi. L'esercito italiano a Tripoli*, (1995), Manifestolibri, Rome, 2011. On the repression of the Libyan resistance in the years of the conquest and of the "re-conquest" (1922-32), see N. LABANCA (ed), *Un nodo. Immagini e documenti sulla repressione coloniale italiana in Libia*, P. Laicata, Manduria-Rome-Bari, 2002, and E. SALERNO, *Genocidio in Libia. Le atrocità nascoste dell'avventura coloniale italiana (1911-1931)*, Manifestolibri, Rome, 2005.

vices and commanders; the harsh living conditions of the troops; the violence of the repression; the cold or hostile attitude of the European powers. These elements supported a feeling

> almost of liberation from the everyday evil of Giovanni Giolitti, from the useless game of parliament and parties. It was a pleasure, after so much policy, so many treaties, agreements, protocols, visits of sovereigns and ministers, after so much chatting about Tripoli … it was a pleasure seeing Italy, finally, move, take the initiative ... move, go as a unit, as a nation ... It was a redemption from painful memories, from facts that seemed indelible history, and continued to give reason, or pretext, to the gossip of the international press in times of harsh contrast or controversy.[37]

In this "moving" and "going," opposing both theoretically and practically the worthless "rituals" of the traditional politics, takes place the discursive transfiguration of the Italo-Turkish War from "imperial campaign" into "national war," made by people, for the people. The war for the "Fourth Shore" (which is a return, not a conquest) becomes almost a complement to the process of national unification. In its turn, this fact reverberates on other elements, first the public image of the army, which, "in Giolitti's time, showed all the symptoms of a deeply rooted malaise".[38]

The process took different forms. The massive mobilisation, and the foresight presiding over the preparation "made great impression at home, because Italy aspired to be what it was not: organised, methodical, efficient".[39] Despite shortcomings, weaknesses, and improvisation, and despite the criticism hitting the high commands for their tactical and strategic

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[37] "quasi di liberazione dal gramo quotidiano di Giovanni Giolitti, dal poco concludente giuoco del Parlamento e dei partiti. Era il piacere, dopo tanta politica estera, tanti trattati, accordi, protocolli, visite di sovrani e ministri e parlottare di Tripoli, il piacere di veder l'Italia finalmente muoversi, passare all'azione …muoversi, andare come unità, come nazione …Era il riscatto da ricordi dolorosi, da fatti che parevano indelebile storia e seguitavano a dare motivo o pretesto al pettegolezzo del giornalismo internazionale nei momenti di inasprito contrasto o polemica", G. VOLPE, *L'impresa di Tripoli 1911-12*, Edizioni Leonardo, Rome, 1946, p. 74.

[38] J. WHITTAM, *The Politics of the Italian Army*, Croom Helm, London-Hamden, CT, 1977, it. ed., *Storia dell'esercito italiano*, Rizzoli, Milan, 1979, p. 222. On the effects of this malaise on the army's "colonial thought", see N. LABANCA, *Discorsi coloniali in uniforme militare, da Assab via Adua verso Tripoli*, in *Storia d'Italia. Annali*, vol. 18, pp. 505-45.

[39] ROMANO, *La quarta sponda*, p. 89.

blunders,[40] this "new and brighter light" would have left a long lasting impression. After the suppression of the 1898 riots, the army returned to be a symbol of national unity, as an institution as well as – in the newly found spirit of national concord – through the men who compose it, a living expression of something transcending narrow geographical divisions and cramped limits of caste and class.[41] Quite paradoxically, the "modern" Libyan War helped thus in strengthening a full corpus of explicitly conservative values, flowing through the same channels that conveyed its "modern" image. Popular books, press, journals and magazines, while well aware of the downsides of the campaign, eagerly cooperated in providing their readers with the symbols and the images to read the war through the prism of "conventional" heroism. In this context, the army became – together with the *Latinitas* and the "myth of the return" – one of the key elements to frame the conflict's experience and to channel the new ambitions of Italy in the wake of a largely conservative modernity.

Conclusions

Chronologically, this process parallels the end of the "historical" Risorgimento, and its transformation, in the official discourse, into ritual representation. Its celebrative dimensions were functional in celebrating the efforts of the ruling class to overcome the limits of the nation building process. They also aimed at promoting the emergence of a shared identity, and at solving the political, social, and economic conflicts into a paternal-

[40] On the military aspects of the Libyan War, see F. GRAMELLINI, *Storia della Guerra Italo-Turca 1911/1912*, Carta Canta, Forlì, 2010; for some contemporary accounts, see G. BEVIONE, *Come siamo andati a Tripoli*, F.lli Bocca, Turin, 1912; G. PIAZZA, *Come conquistammo Tripoli. Diario dal campo di guerra*, Bernardo Lux, Rome, 1912; R. D'ANDREA, *La conquista libica. Cronistoria della guerra italo-turca dalla presa di Tripoli al trattato di Losanna*, Bideri, Naples, 1913; B. MELLI, *La guerra italo-turca. Cronistoria dei principali eventi politici e militari, con precedenti e conseguenti a tutto l'anno 1913, annesso un elenco ufficiale dei morti e feriti*, E. Voghera, Rome, 1914; for the war's official history, see MINISTERO DELLA GUERRA, STATO MAGGIORE DEL REGIO ESERCITO, UFFICIO STORICO, *Campagna di Libia*, 5 vols, Rome, 1922-27.

[41] On the situation on the eve of the Libyan War, when "it seemed that, in the public opinion, the memory [of the Adowa defeat] was faded, becoming more and more vague", and when "the single figures had been gradually replaced by more abstract entity; the government, the commanding officers, the soldiers… more easily understandable by non-protagonists and non-specialists, but also more easily mouldable by full-fledged policies of memory", see LABANCA, *Discorsi coloniali*, pp. 535 ff.

istic perspective, of understanding and goodwill on the part of the upper classes, and of respect and obedience on the part of the subordinates. In this sense, the Libyan War, far from supporting the spirit of *union sacrée* prompted by the outbreak of the conflict, shed light on the emergence of a new domestic front: the radicalisation of the political landscape, and the convergence of the interests of nationalists, Catholics, and right-wing liberals that would have emerged in the legislative elections of 1913.

In this framework, the Libyan experience conveyed a peculiar dimension of silent duty and obedience. The soldier was, first, a man who did his duty in a group where his position was known and respected. A set of written and unwritten rules defined and mediated his role either in the barracks (or on the battlefield) or in everyday life. The "military model" (more generally: the set of values that defined the soldier as both a human being and a social prototype) became the more or less spontaneous answer to a need for order, hierarchy and discipline that the country and its ruling class so urgently perceived. It is on this element that the strength of the "military myth" rests. Both in its external aspects and in its deeper meanings, it was shaped by the politically magmatic climate of Italy at the beginning of the twentieth century, and reflected the long-term transformations affecting a nation that had started to break away from the traditional reference of the Risorgimento. The promotion of the "military myth" and the adoption of some military corps as a model of the "new Italian" seem to reflect a shift in the favour of the ruling elite towards a new and more reliable kind of citizen, in an age of political upheaval and against the background of a declining national enthusiasm. It is worth noting that, for example, in the early twentieth century, the Alpini emerged, in the public sentiment, as something different from the "common" soldiers. Rather, they are taken as the model of a new national prototype (hard worker, devout, conservative, loyal to the monarchy and its values), somehow opposed to both the dashing Bersaglieri (too much connected to the peculiar traits of the Risorgimento) and the line infantry, somehow embodying an inherently dangerous "mass" dimension of war and society.

CHAPTER V

ITALIAN DIPLOMACY AND THE LIBYAN ENTERPRISE

GIANPAOLO FERRAIOLI[1]

On the eve of the enterprise

In 1910 Italy seemed to be a short step away from losing the chance of incorporating Libya into its colonial system. That year the Italian foreign minister, Antonino Paternò Castello, Marquis of Di San Giuliano, realised that the "peaceful penetration" policy in Libya was about to fail, given the hostility of the Ottoman government and the competition from the economic undertakings of the other powers.[2] Should Italy have had to abandon its colonial plans for Libya after thirty years of preparation, it would have meant a setback of no little gravity. It would have been a farewell to its hopes of becoming a great power.[3] Antonino di San

[1] The Second University of Naples.

[2] Cf. Pestalozza to Di San Giuliano, July 29 and August 18. 1910, *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani* (henceforth DDI), s. IV, vol. V-VI, dd. 390 and 411; San Giuliano to Luzzatti, October 20. 1910, d. 524. For an analysis of the life and policies of Di San Giuliano: G. FERRAIOLI, *Politica e diplomazia in Italia tra XIX e XX secolo. Vita di Antonino di San Giuliano (1852-1914)*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2007. On the peaceful penetration in Libya, see: R. MORI, "La penetrazione pacifica in Libia dal 1907 al 1911 e il Banco di Roma", *Rivista di studi politici internazionali*, 1957, fasc. 1, pp. 102-108; A. D.ALESSANDRO, "Il Banco di Roma e la guerra di Libia", *Storia e politica*, 1968, n. III, pp. 491-508; F. MALGERI, *La guerra libica 1911-12*, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Rome, 1970, cap. I; L. DE ROSA, *Storia del Banco di Roma*, Bank of Rome, Rome 1981; D.J. GRANGE, *L'Italie et la Méditerranée (1896-1911)*, Ecole française, Rome, 1994.

3 For an analysis of the agreements between Italy and the great powers on Libya, see: F. TOMMASINI, *L'Italia alla vigilia della guerra. La politica estera di Tommaso Tittoni*, Zanichelli, Bologna, 1934; L. PETEANI, *La questione libica nella*

Giuliano wished to prevent such a failure. In a speech given in the Chamber of Deputies on December 2. 1910, he requested that the Ottoman government recognise Libya as an Italian "monopoly": a territory that was the exclusive reserve of Italian economic initiatives.[4]

The regime of the Young Turks, counting on support from the governments of Germany and Austria, naturally refused to have anything to do with Di San Giuliano's plans.[5] At the end of 1910 and the beginning of 1911, therefore, the latter resorted to threatening the use of force to make the Turkish government give up any idea of impeding the Italian plans.[6] This threat was thereafter withdrawn, but Di San Giuliano had by then realised that if Italy were to succeed in carrying out its intentions for Libya, in all likelihood the only option open to it was to prepare for military intervention against Turkey.[7] Such intervention would however be opposed by the other powers, and in particular by the two nations allied in the Triple Alliance, Germany and Austria-Hungary; it was no coincidence that these two nations had harshly criticised the escalation against

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diplomazia europea, C. Cya, Florence, 1938; L. SALVATORELLI, *La Triplice Alleanza. Storia diplomatica 1877-1912*, ISPI, Milan, 1939; G. VOLPE, *L'Italia nella Triplice Alleanza (1882-1915)*, ISPI, Milan, 1939; L. ALBERTINI, *Le origini della guerra del 1914*, vol. I, Bocca, Milan, 1942; E. SERRA, *Camille Barrère e l'intesa italo-francese*, Giuffrè, Milan, 1950; IBID., *L'intesa mediterranea del 1902. Una fase risolutiva nei rapporti italo-inglesi*, Giuffrè, Milan, 1957; G. DONNINI, *L'accordo italo-russo di Racconigi*, Giuffrè, Milan, 1983; P. PASTORELLI, "Giulio Prinetti ministro degli Esteri (1901-1902)", *Nuova Antologia*, 1997, n. 2197, pp. 53-70.

[4] *Atti Parlamentari*, *Camera dei Deputati* (henceforth AP, CD), XXIII legislature, Debates, I session, on December 2. 1910, vol. IX, p. 10175. In general terms, for an analysis of connections between domestic policy and foreign and colonial policy aimed at consolidating the Italian state after unification, see as one example: F. CHABOD, *Storia della politica estera italiana dal 1870 al 1896. Le premesse*, Laterza, Bari, 1951; E. GENTILE, *La Grande Italia. Il mito della nazione nel XX secolo*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 2006.

[5] Cf. Marschall to Bethmann Hollweg, January 2. 1911, *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette (1871-1914)* (henceforth GP), vol. 30, p. I, d. 10806. Cf. Mayor to Di San Giuliano, December 6. 1910, DDI, s. IV, vol. V-VI, d. 601.

[6] Di San Giuliano to Mayor, December 7. 1910, IBID., dd. 603 and 604; Di San Giuliano to Mayor, January 22. 1911, *Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri* (henceforth ASMAE), collection of telegrams sent, n. 307, tel. 236.

[7] Cf. Di San Giuliano to Pansa, February 16. 1911, DDI, s. IV, vol. V-VI, d. 723; Di San Giuliano to Mayor, March 6. 1911, IBID., d. 740; Di San Giuliano to Avarna, March 16. 1911, d. 751.

Constantinople set in motion by Luzzatti's ministry during his period in office.[8]

The second Moroccan crisis and the declaration of war on Turkey

When Giolitti became prime minister of the Italian government for the fourth time in the spring of 1911, he confirmed Di San Giuliano at the head of the foreign ministry. Concerning the solution of the Libyan question, Giolitti in fact feared that should Italy commence military intervention against the Ottoman Empire, it would have to face the opposition of all the great European powers, none of which had any desire to see the Ottoman Empire's *status quo* upset.[9]

The opening of the second Moroccan crisis on July 1. 1911 therefore proved providential.[10] This second Moroccan crisis, with Germany and France menacingly opposed to one another, captured the attention of all the other European powers, thus leaving Italy free to plan and carry out the military expedition towards the coast of Libya with no veto from any of the main foreign powers. This was, if ever, the moment for the "now or never" argument – at least never again under such very favourable conditions – that Di San Giuliano explained in the famous memo he wrote at Fiuggi on July 28 to convince King Victor Emmanuel III and Giolitti that unquestionably within a few weeks, and certainly before the end of the Moroccan crisis, the expedition to Tripoli should begin.[11]

Whatever happened, a change in the Mediterranean *status quo* was certainly about to ensue with the expansion of the French colonial empire in Morocco. Furthermore, German colonial expansion was also likely in order to counterbalance that of the French. Italy therefore could not remain a passive on-looker to such events; it should take what would most probably be its last chance to readjust in its own favour the balance of

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[8] Cf. Jagow to Bethmann Hollweg, December 7. 1910, GP, vol. 30, p. I, d. 10801; Mérey to Aehrenthal, December 7. 1910, *Österreich-Ungarns Auusenpolitik von der Bosnischen krise 1908 bis zum Kriegsausbruch 1914. Diplomatische Aktenstücke des österreichisch-ungarischen Ministerium des Äussern* (henceforth OUA) , vol. III, d. 2355.

[9] G. FERRERO, *Potere*, Edizioni di Comunità, Rome, 1946, p. 326.

[10] J. RENNELL RODD, *Social and Diplomatic Memories*, vol. III, Edward Arnold & Co., London, 1925, p. 141.

[11] "Promemoria di San Giuliano al Re e a Giolitti", July 28. 1911, *Dalle carte di Giovanni Giolitti. Quarant'anni di politica italiana*, vol. III, edited by P. D'ANGIOLINI, G. CAROCCI, C. PAVONE, Feltrinelli, Milan, 1962, D. 49.

power in the Mediterranean and in the colonial world. Apart from anything else, this connection between the Libyan and the Moroccan question had also been envisaged in the agreements between Italy and France of 1900-1902.[12]

However, the documents testify to Giolitti's concern regarding Di San Giuliano's plans. In the summer of 1911, the Piedmontese statesman revealed how cautious he was regarding even the distant possibility of undertaking colonial "adventures".[13] Di San Giuliano therefore had a hard task to convince Giolitti that the initiative was opportune. In any case, the minister from Catania feared that once the summer was over, the naval expedition to Tripoli would have to be put off for many months due to inclement weather.[14]

Yet even on September 14 (a fortnight before the declaration of war on Turkey) Giolitti had still not entirely made up his mind to give the signal for an immediate expedition to Tripoli.[15] Only on September 16-17 did the prime minister finally come out into the open; only then – when faced with the fact that any further waste of time would favour the Turks' military preparations for the defence of Tripoli – did he decide to order the navy and the army to carry out the undertaking.[16] This indecision of Giolitti's goes some way towards explaining the improvisation shown thereafter by

[12] IBID.

[13] See also G. GIOLITTI, *Memorie della mia vita*, Garzanti, Milan, 1943, pp. 335-7. On Giolitti's policy in general terms, see: G. CAROCCI, *Giolitti e l'età giolittiana,* Einaudi, Turin, 1961; G. SPADOLINI, *Il mondo di Giolitti*, Le Monnier, Florence, 1969; N. VALERI, *Giolitti*, Utet, Turin 1971; A.A. MOLA, *Giolitti. Lo statista della nuova Italia*, Mondadori, Milan, 2003.

[14] Cf. Di San Giuliano to Giolitti, September 2. 1911, a document also published in *Giovanni Giolitti al governo, in parlamento, nel carteggio*, vol. III, *Il carteggio*, t. II (1906-1928), edited by A.A. MOLA and A.G. RICCI, Bastogi, Foggia, 2010, d. 195.

[15] Di San Giuliano to Giolitti, September 15. 1911, IBID., d. 200.

[16] Cf. De Martino to Di San Giuliano, September 8. 1911, ASMAE, collection of telegrams received, fasc. 315, tel. 3468; Spingardi to Giolitti, IBID., tel. s.d. and s.n.; Di San Giuliano to Giolitti, *Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Carte Giolitti* (henceforth ACS, CG), busta 12, fasc. 10, tel. s.n.; Giolitti to Leonardi Cattolica, September 22. 1911, in *Giovanni Giolitti al governo…*, cit., d. 219; Leonardi Cattolica to Giolitti, September 22 1911, IBID., d. 220; Giolitti to Victor Emmanuel III, September 25 1911, IBID., d. 225. Cf. also G. GIOLITTI, *op. cit.*, pp. 364-5; F. MALGERI, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

the Italian military command when the war against Turkey finally got under way as of September 29.[17]

The Austro-German allies were indeed very much against the Libyan enterprise. Their disinclination was mainly diplomatic, and was limited to certain attempts to stop Italy at the last minute.[18] Di San Giuliano himself, for example, was never beset by the fear that the allies would place insurmountable obstacles in Italy's path, especially if the Libyan enterprise were to be launched while the Moroccan crisis was still in progress.[19] Never would Berlin, in particular, have risked losing the alliance with Italy by blocking its expansion in Africa at a time when Europe was splitting into two clear blocs of opposing powers.[20] In Austria-Hungary, also, the top military officers wished to take the opportunity offered by the Italian-Turkish war to separate the Hapsburg Empire's destiny from that of Italy, but in the end the leading political circles, emperor Franz Joseph above all, were of the same mind as the Germans, having no doubt that the Triple Alliance should continue to exist.[21]

Several factors must be kept in mind regarding the positions held by Russia, England and France. The British government had consented to the Libyan enterprise at the end of July 1911, almost encouraging the government in Rome to go into action against the Turks. But it took great care to specify that Italy could only act after furnishing Europe with proof of the Turks' preconceived hostility towards Italian undertakings in Libya. Furthermore, England consented to what it thought would be a rapid naval intervention, limited to military and political effects and definitely not aimed at annexing Libya to Italy.[22] France also gave its consent to the

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[17] Cf. L. ALBERTINI, *op. cit.*, p. 361; M. MAZZETTI, *L'esercito italiano nella Triplice Alleanza*, ESI, Naples, 1974, p. 245; A. DEL BOCA, *Gli italiani in Libia. Tripoli bel suol d'amore 1860-1922*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1986, pp. 72-3.

[18] Di San Giuliano to Giolitti, September 26. 1911, in *Giovanni Giolitti al governo…*, cit., d. 227. Cf. W.D.WRIGLEY, "Germany and the Turco-Italian War 1911-1912"*, International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 1980, n. 3.

[19] Di San Giuliano to Giolitti, September 15. 1911, cit.

[20] Cf. Di San Giuliano to Giolitti, September 23. 1911, *Giovanni Giolitti al governo…* , cit. d. 222 (with attached letter from Pansa to Di San Giuliano dated September 18). Cf. "Memo of the advisor to the German foreign minister, von Rosenberg", October 9. 1911, GP, vol. 30, p. I, d. 10880.

[21] Cf. "Nota del capo di stato maggiore dell'esercito, Conrad", September 24. 1911, OUA, vol. III, d. 2644; "Decisione dell'imperatore Francesco Giuseppe", October 17 1911, IBID., d. 2890. Cf. L. ALBERTINI, *op. cit.*, p. 369.

[22] Cf. Imperiali to Di San Giuliano, July 26, DDI, s. IV, vol. VII-VIII, d. 104; Imperiali to Di San Giuliano, September 3. 1911, ASMAE, collection of telegrams received, fasc. 317, tel. n. 5159; Grey to Rodd, July 28. 1911, *British Documents*

Libyan enterprise since it was itself dealing with the second Moroccan crisis. France, therefore, did not wish to go against the 1900-1902 understanding with Italy. Yet Di San Giuliano never shut his eyes to the fact that when the Moroccan crisis was over, France would reappear on the scene as Italy's main adversary in the Mediterranean. Which would probably mean Paris placing numerous obstacles in the way of Italy's plans for Libya.[23] Lastly, Russia also conformed to the 1909 Racconigi agreement but let it be clearly understood that it did not wish the Italian endeavour to cause an anti-Turkey sentiment uprising in the Balkans, since that might well lead to serious problems between Russia and Austria-Hungary in that European sector. Russian diplomacy also feared that Italy might leave Vienna free to act in the Balkan peninsula in exchange for Austria's consent to its Libya plan.[24]

Annexation or protectorate?

These were the reasons that led Di San Giuliano to favour an Italian decision to demand indirect dominion over Libya, leaving formal sovereignty over this territory to Turkey. Supported in this view by one of his closest collaborators, the ambassador in Paris, Tommaso Tittoni, he wished to conciliate the views of the great European powers towards the political position that Italy would hold in its new colonial possession.[25] It was in any case clear that Germany in particular did not want to see Italy punish Turkey too heavily, hoping that Italy would come to an agreement with Turkey as regards the political status of Libya.[26] Lastly, Di San Giuliano was of the opinion that if the Turks were allowed to retain their formal sovereignty of Libya, their military opposition to Italy would not be too strong. Thus the latter would in effect obtain domination over Libya – a sort of political-military protectorate – while saving time, money and the lives of many soldiers, since the initiative would commence and terminate

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on the Origins of the War 1898-1914 (henceforth BD), vol. IX, d. 221. Cf. also C. SETON-WATSON, *British Perceptions of the Italo-Turkish War 1911-1912*, in *Italia e Inghilterra nell'età dell'imperialismo*, edited by E. SERRA and C. SETON-WATSON, F. Angeli, Milan, 1990.

[23] "Promemoria di Di San Giuliano al Re e a Giolitti", July 28. 1911, cit.

[24] Di San Giuliano to Melegari, August 12 and 29, ASMAE, collection of telegrams sent, fasc. 311 and 316, tel. 3105 and 3295; Di San Giuliano to Melegari, September 10. 1911, DDI, s. IV, vol. VII-VIII, d. 155; Melegari to Di San Giuliano, August 26 and September 14. 1911, IBID., dd. 137 and 164.

[25] Tittoni to Di San Giuliano, October 2. 1911, IBID., d. 284..

[26] Cf. Di San Giuliano to Pansa, September 24. 1911, IBID., d. 203.

within a brief period. This would prevent any possible conflict between Italy and Turkey, which might otherwise cause trouble in the Balkans or, worse still, both clashes might merge into one. And this was a question of no little importance. Italy could not risk finding itself still engaged in Libya during a revolt of the Balkan states against Turkey, since the government in Rome had to be on the look-out for any moves made by Austria in the peninsula just across the Adriatic. On the other hand, it was through the possible expansionist moves of Austria in the Balkan sector that Italy hoped to crown its greatest diplomatic project: the peaceful integration within its frontiers of the still irredentist territories – that is Trento and if possibly also Trieste – through the compensation system with Austria laid down in Article 7 of the Triple Alliance.[27]

In both the document with the ultimatum sent to Turkey on September 26. 1911 and above all in the talk with Ludwig von Ambrozy, the Austro-Hungarian chargé d'affaires in Rome, on October 3, Di San Giuliano made it clear to Europe that if Italy were not forced into a long war, it would allow the sultan to keep formal sovereignty over Libya.[28] In fact, as of October 8 he began to send the Italian ambassadors telegrams saying instead that Italy would rather obtain "the pure and simple extension of its complete sovereignty over Tripolitania and Cyrenaica".[29]

The fact is that in the meanwhile Giolitti and king Victor Emmanuel III had agreed to annex Libya to Italy.[30] Giolitti had in any case realised that only the annexation solution would obtain the consent of the whole liberal party.[31] This was the one decision that would enable Italy to carry out its project of opening Libya up to re-population: a place where Italian workers and Italian capital could be sent without having to render account either to Turkey or to any of the other powers.[32] Lastly, it is also quite

[27] "Promemoria from Di San Giuliano to the King and to Giolitti", July 28. 1911, cit.

[28] Cfr. Di San Giuliano to De Martino, September 26. 1911, ASMAE, cabinet archive, casella 22 bis, fasc. 162, tel. 3654 (in case of doubt regarding the exact moment at which the ultimatum was sent, perhaps in the early hours of the 27th, in n. 3680, see: DDI, s. IV, vol. VII-VIII, d. 230). Cf. Di San Giuliano to Avarna, October 3. 1911, DDI, s. IV, vol. VII-VIII, d. 292. Cf. also: "Protettorato o annessione?", *La Stampa*, September 29. 1911.

[29] Di San Giuliano to the embassies, October 10. 1911, DDI, s. IV, vol. VII-VIII, d. 338. Cf. also Di San Giuliano to Avarna, October 8. 1911, IBID., d. 324.

[30] Di San Giuliano to Victor Emmanuel III, October 4. 1911, *Giovanni Giolitti al governo… ,* cit., d. 243.

[31] Di San Giuliano to Giolitti, October 5. 1911, IBID., d. 244.

[32] Cf. Di San Giuliano to Avarna and Pansa, October 13 1911, ASMAE, collection of telegrams sent, fasc. 316, tel. 4003.

probable that Giolitti hoped to crown his success to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the unification of Italy. It may well have been this that blunted his proverbial prudence and led him to over-estimate Italy's military capability. He believed that "his" Italy was in a position to impose his decisions, however radical, on Turkey without loss of time.[33]

The decision to annex Libya was then ratified by a government decree on November 5. 1911, becoming law on February 27. 1912. There were however no misunderstandings or important divergences between Di San Giuliano and Giolitti regarding ideas and plans, as might appear from an examination of the issue of the annexation or protectorate of Libya. Their collaboration was indeed frank and cordial, for it continued until the outbreak of the First World War. They themselves realised that as statesmen they complemented each other: one with detailed knowledge of the mechanisms involved in international politics, the other with a wide overall vision of the general interests of the country and of the connections between domestic and foreign policy.[34]

The war and the great powers

The outcome of the annexation of Libya was that Turkey decided for war to the bitter end against Italy. The protraction of the initiative therefore brought to light the great powers' fairly explicit opposition towards Italy, also because Italian military action upset the Mediterranean set-up and touched upon the interests of the most important European states. During the early weeks of the Libya endeavour therefore Berlin might well have taken a strongly anti-Italian stance, though this in fact did not occur. The German government continued to respect the Triple Alliance.[35]

Russia showed itself ready to hinder the Libyan enterprise. In the autumn of 1911, the government in Saint Petersburg tried to obtain a declaration from Di San Giuliano to the effect that Italy would never attack the Turkish Straits. Russia thus hoped to convince the Constantinople government of the importance to the Ottoman Empire of its support. This might have won the

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[33] A. THEODOLI, *A cavallo di due secoli*, La Navicella, Rome, 1950, pp. 61-2.

[34] Cf. also G. FERRAIOLI, *Giolitti e San Giuliano: un sodalizio non casuale*, *Giovanni Giolitti al governo…*, cit., pp. 43-59. Cf. also F. MALGERI, *op. cit.*, p. 156, note 7.

[35] Pansa to Di San Giuliano, October 19. 1911, ASMAE, collection of telegrams received, fasc. 319, tel. 5291; Bompard to de Selves, October 23. 1911, *Documents Diplomatiques Francais (1871-1914)* (henceforth DDF), s. II, t. XIV, d. 467. Cf. also A. THEODOLI, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

Russians Turkey's consent to manage the area of the Straits in common accord.[36] Di San Giuliano for his part understood these Russian manoeuvres; however he informed the Tsarist government that he had no intention of being a party to "reinforcing Turkey's dangerous belief that her most vital points were invulnerable".[37]

Likewise, the Mediterranean antagonism between Italy and France irrupted once more in the winter of 1912, following the memorable *Carthage* and *Manouba* incidents, two French ships seized by the Italian navy on the Marseilles-North Africa route because they were believed to be gun-running on behalf of the Arab-Turkish army in Libya. In this case too Di San Giuliano and Giolitti eventually managed to patch up relations with Paris; but it was the start of friction between Italy and France that was to last until the outbreak of the First World War.[38]

Even the "traditional friendship" between Italy and England came under a good deal of strain over the Libyan issue, also because Great Britain saw the expansion in the Mediterranean of Italy – who was after all an ally of Germany – a threat to England's imperial interests. It did not please London that Italy, with its naval manoeuvres and its occupation of the Dodecanese islands in the Aegean, might prove an obstacle along certain routes that were vital for sea communications between the various parts of the British Empire.[39]

In fact the occupation of the Dodecanese islands revealed how dangerous an Italo-Turkish war would prove in the long run for the development of Italy's most important foreign policies. It was in any case immediately clear to Rome that, should it wish to break the Turks' resistance, it would have to carry the war right up to the coasts of Anatolia,

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[36] Cf. W.C. ASKEW, *Europe and Italy's Acquisition of Libya 1911-1912*, University Press, Durham, 1942, pp. 110-1 and 127-9; A.J.P. TAYLOR, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848-1918*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1954, pp. 474-6

[37] Di San Giuliano to Melegari, November 28 1911, ASMAE, collection of telegrams sent, fasc. 320, tel. 5474. Cf. also: Di San Giuliano to Melegari, November 28. 1911, DDI, s. IV, vol. VII-VIII, d. 486.

[38] Cf. Poincaré to ambassadors, January 23. 1912, DDF, s. III, t. I, d. 506; Tittoni to Di San Giuliano, January 23. 1913, DDI, s. IV, vol. VII-VIII, dd. 627 and 628; Di San Giuliano to Tittoni, January 24. 1912, ASMAE, collection of telegrams sent, fasc. 324, tel. 356. Cf. A. TORRE, "Gli incidenti del "Carthage" e del "Manouba"", *Ricerche storiche ed economiche in memoria di Corrado Barbagallo*, edited by L. DE ROSA, vol. III, ESI, Naples, 1970. On relations between Italy and France just before the outbreak of the First World War, see: E. DECLEVA, *Da Adua a Sarajevo. La politica estera italiana e la Francia 1896-1914*, Laterza, Bari, 1971.

[39] Grey to Rodd, January 28. 1914, BD, vol. X, p. I, d. 217.

in the heart of the Ottoman Empire. To do this the occupation of a number of the Aegean islands was considered a decisive military move, in order to provide the Italian navy with advanced naval bases for the easier interception of Ottoman convoys carrying supplies to the Arab-Turkish army in Libya.[40]

However, before naval operations to occupy the Dodecanese could be started, Di San Giuliano was faced with serious diplomatic issues to solve. As we have mentioned, Article 7 of the Triple Alliance regulated the relations between Austria-Hungary and Italy with regard to the situation in the Adriatic, the Balkans and the Aegean. It established that should one of the two powers occupy territory in those three areas, whether permanently or temporarily, that power would be obliged to find territorial compensation for the other. Such an article was clearly to Italy's advantage. It was not by chance that Italian diplomacy had always believed that sooner or later Austria, expanding in the Balkans, would peacefully agree to compensate Italy, perhaps even with the irredentist lands.[41]

In 1911-1912, however, Di San Giuliano had to face the possibility that the terms of the problem might be overturned: in occupying the Dodecanese, Italy would have to find territorial compensation for Austria, otherwise Article 7 might lapse, together with Italy's plans for the irredentist lands. The minister from Catania was therefore forced to take steps not only to obtain Austria's consent to the occupation of the Dodecanese, but also to convince the Vienna government that such occupation did not come under the terms of Article 7, which would thus continue to fuel Italy's diplomatic plans for Trento and Trieste.[42]

The Hapsburg government of course at first refused to grant consent to Italy's occupation of territories in the Aegean. Both the Austrian ambassador in Rome, Kajetan von Mérey, and Vienna's foreign minister,

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[40] Victor Emmanuel III to Giolitti, October 25. 1911, *Giovanni Giolitti al governo…*, cit., d. 271; Giolitti to Victor Emmanuel III, October 25. 1911, IBID., d. 272. Cf. also R. SERTOLI SALIS, *Le isole italiane dell'Egeo dall'occupazione alla sovranità*, Vittoriano, Rome, 1939; R. ORLANDI, "L'occupazione italiana di Rodi e del Dodecaneso", *Storia e Politica*, 1982, fasc. I.

[41] Cf. for example Avarna to Di San Giuliano, May 18. 1910, DDI, s. IV, vol. V-VI, d. 287. Cf. also P. PASTORELLI, *Il principio di nazionalità nella politica estera italiana*, IBID., *Dalla prima alla seconda guerra mondiale. Momenti e problemi della politica estera italiana 1914-1943*, LED, Milan, 1997, pp. 199-225. May I also mention: G. FERRAIOLI, *Federico Chabod e la Valle d'Aosta tra Francia e Italia*, Aracne, Rome, 2010, pp. 65-9 and 114 ff.

[42] Di San Giuliano to Avarna, October 27. 1911, ASMAE, collection of telegrams sent, fasc. 320, tel. 4568.

Alois von Aehrenthal, made it clear to Di San Giuliano that Italy was under an obligation to comply with Article 7. Non-compliance would imply responsibility for the lapse of the article itself. It therefore became necessary to enlist the assistance of Germany to overcome Austria's opposition. This highlights yet again the value that Berlin placed on Italy for the continuation of the Triple Alliance. Indeed, Di San Giuliano employed arguments that were worrying for Germany: if the German government did not wish "to compromise the Triple Alliance and cause complications of the utmost gravity, it should take immediate steps to stop Austria's opposition".[43]

At the end of March 1912, Di San Giuliano was certain that Germany had come to the opinion that it would be right to support the Italian views.[44] It only remained for him to push the hesitant ambassador in the Hapsburg capital, Avarna, into taking immediate action to gain the consent of the Austro-Hungarian government to the Italian occupation of certain islands.[45] According to Di San Giuliano, Avarna was to explain to the Austro-Hungarian government that when one of the allies was at war with a third power – as Italy then was with Turkey – the other should not place obstacles in the way of its military decisions. Furthermore, the occupation of a few "Asian" islands off the coast of Anatolia would not fall within the scope of Article 7 which concerned European territories, while it would have repercussions regarding Libya, an area certainly not examined by that article.[46]

By mid-April the Vienna government had given Italy permission to occupy the Dodecanese islands.[47] In Di San Giuliano's opinion, it was

[43] Di San Giuliano to Pansa, November 22. 1911, ASMAE, collection of telegrams sent, fasc. 320, tel. 5307.

[44] Victor Emmanuele III to Giolitti, March 25. 1912, ACS, CG, busta 12, fasc. 8, lettera s.n.; Di San Giuliano to Giolitti, March 25. 1912, IBID., letter s.n. Cf. Wilhelm II to Bethmann Hollweg, GP, vol. 30, p. II, d. 11624.

[45] Di San Giuliano to Avarna, March 30. 1912, ASMAE, collection of cabinet telegrams sent, fasc. 341, tel. 477.

[46] Di San Giuliano to Avarna, April 4 and 12. 1912, DDI, s. IV, vol. VII-VIII, dd. 753 and 768; Di San Giuliano to Avarna and Pansa, April 8. 1912, IBID., d. 761; Di San Giuliano to Pansa, April 4 and 5. 1912 ASMAE, collection of cabinet telegrams sent, fasc. 341, tel. 494, 496 and 499; Di San Giuliano to Avarna and Pansa, April 9 and 10, IBID., tel. 524, 532, 535 and 536.

[47] Avarna to Di San Giuliano, April 15. 1912, ASMAE, collection of cabinet telegrams received, fasc. 340, tel. 519. Cf. "Relazione su una visita dell'ambasciatore italiano", April 13. 1912, OUA, vol. IV, d. 3436; Berchtold to Mérey, April 15. 1912, IBID., d. 3440; "Relazione su una conversazione con l'ambasciatore italiano", April 18. 1912, IBID., d. 3447.

evident that this permission left unaltered the Italian interpretation of Article 7, which at that moment would not come into play in Austria's favour.[48] This proved a notable diplomatic success for him, since Article 7 would later be of use to the Rome government in 1914-15 when, with the First World War, it became effectively necessary to demand the return of the irredentist lands from Austria in exchange for the Hapsburg expansion in the Balkans to the detriment of Serbia.

The peace treaty

The Dodecanese occupation convinced the Turkish government to seek diplomatic contact with Italy; this contact eventually led to the peace negotiations held in Switzerland during the summer and the early days of autumn 1912. These negotiations were conducted for the Italians mainly under the supervision of Giolitti, who had by then determined that the conquest of Libya should be linked to his name.[49]

It was however Di San Giuliano to have the role of influential advisor to the prime minister; in the long run, it was he who had to explain the results of the Italo-Turkish peace negotiations to the great powers and obtain their consent. The Sicilian minister was actually interested in one thing above all: bringing negotiations to a close as soon as possible and signing a peace treaty with Turkey, to avoid the Libyan initiative overlapping with the rising against the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, an event by then certain and imminent. Di San Giuliano's concern remained in any case the same: that Italy, still committed in Libya, would be unable to devote the necessary attention to Austria's moves towards directing the Balkan situation.[50]

While peace negotiations were going forward in Switzerland, Di San Giuliano therefore was a factor that helped to moderate the Italian government's positions. He was in fact willing to admit in the peace treaty that Italy had not conquered Libya's inland territory, which could not therefore be annexed by Rome, but which could become a sort of native

[48] Di San Giuliano to Avarna, April 16, May 20 and 28, June 3. 1912, DDI, s. IV, vol. VII-VIII, dd. 773, 843, 873 and 884. Cf. G. GIOLITTI, *op, cit.*, pp. 404-5.
[49] G. GIOLITTI, *op. cit.*, ch. XIII and XIV. Cf. F. MALGERI, *op. cit.,* pp. 417 ff. On the figure of Volpi: R.A. WEBSTER, *L'imperialismo industriale italiano, Studio sul prefascismo*, Einaudi, Turin, 1974; S. ROMANO, *Giuseppe Volpi. Industria e finanza tra Giolitti e Mussolini*, Bompiani, Milan, 1979.
[50] Di San Giuliano to Giolitti, ACS, CG, b. 18, fasc. 42, letter s.d. and s.n.

kingdom to which Turkey could grant independence.[51] But this endeavour was blocked by Giolitti, who would not allow the peace negotiations to cast any doubt on the fact, pure and simple, of the annexation of the whole of Libya to Italy.[52]

Eventually Turkey gave way and on October 18. 1912 signed the Lausanne (Ouchy) peace treaty.[53] On one point, however, the Ottoman government unquestionably prevailed: it did not acknowledge Italian sovereignty over Libya in that treaty, with the result that the latter, together with the unilateral documents preceding it, was to say the very least ambiguous.[54] In order to terminate the initiative, the Italian government decided in the end to adopt Di San Giuliano's position: to satisfy Turkey's "self respect" without imposing on that country an explicit, public recognition of the annexation of Libya to Italy.[55]

At that point the Italian foreign minister's main objective was that the great powers should recognise Italian sovereignty over Libya, such recognition being essential for the ratification of the initiative.[56] In the end, recognition on the part of all the great powers of Italy's annexation of Libya came quite rapidly: by the end of October 1912. Yet the sequence of events and the means by which it arrived in Rome prove that the Austro-German allies now accepted Italian expansion in North Africa without any difficulty.[57] In fact they wished to consolidate the Triple Alliance, renewing it early on December 5. 1912. This proves that Austria itself had decided to keep the progress of the Balkan wars under control by maintaining close contact with Italy. However, the relative delay with which France, for example, recognised the Libyan conquest reveals that a rupture was forming between the Entente and the Rome government

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[51] Di San Giuliano to Giolitti, August 11. 1912, *Giovanni Giolitti al governo…*, cit., dd. 374 and 375. Cf. G. GIOLITTI, *op. cit.*, p. 439.

[52] Giolitti to Garroni, September 2. 1912, *Giovanni Giolitti al governo…*, cit., d. 400.

[53] G. GIOLITTI, *op. cit.*, pp. 455-9.

[54] Cf. M. KHADDURI, *Modern Libya. A Study in Political Development*, The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1963, p. 12; F. MALGER I, *op. cit,* pp. 355-6; T.W. CHILDS, *Italo-Turkish Diplomacy and the War over Libya 1911-12*, Brill, Leiden, 1990, p. 226.

[55] Cf. Di San Giuliano to Giolitti, August 11. 1912, *Giovanni Giolitti al governo…*, cit., d. 374.

[56] Di San Giuliano to Torretta, October 5. 1912, ASMAE, collection of telegrams sent, fasc. 343, tel. 1506.

[57] Cf. Berchtold to Flotow, October 7 and 14. 1912, OUA, vol. IV, dd. 3978 and 4090; Flotow to Berchtold, October 9. 1912, IBID., d. 4011; Ambrozy to Berchtold, October 15. 1912, IBID., d. 4107.

which, in those two years preceding the outbreak of the First World War, was more serious than it was apparently believed to be.[58]

Di San Giuliano believed the conquest of Libya to be the foundations allowing Italy to carry out the foreign policy of a great power, as the times demanded.[59] By now Italy had its own colony to populate, a colony which, according to the Giolitti government, would be capable of receiving the hundreds of thousands of Italian emigrants who each year continued to go to the Americas or to northern Europe in search of work.[60]

[58] Di San Giuliano to Tittoni, October 19. 1912, ASMAE, collection of cabinet telegrams sent, fasc. 343, tel. 1644; Poincaré to Barrère, October 20 and 29. 1912, DDF, s. III, t. IV, dd. 206 and 275; Di San Giuliano to Giolitti, October 25. 1912, *Giovanni Giolitti al governo*..., cit., dd. 488, 489 and 490. Cf. also G. FERRAIOLI, "Considerazioni sulla politica estera dell'Italia giolittiana", *Clio*, 2011, n. 1, pp. 55-82.

[59] AP, CD, XXIII legislatura, Discussioni, I session, on February 22. 1913, vol. XIX, p. 23318.

[60] AP, CD, XXIV Legislatura, Discussioni, I session, on December 16. 1913, vol. I, pp. XI and 482 ff.

CHAPTER VI

A HALF-HEARTED FRIENDSHIP: FRANCE AND THE ITALIAN CONQUEST OF TRIPOLITANIA AND CYRENAICA 1911-1912

LUCIANO MONZALI[1]

France and the Libyan question

Since the 1880s Italy began to outline plans to conquer the Ottoman territories of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. But to fulfill its ambitions to conquer, the Rome government had to deal with the major Mediterranean powers, particularly France and Great Britain. After the fall of the Crispi government in 1896, the strong political and diplomatic confrontation between Italy and France ended and the Libyan question was one of the issues which Rome and Paris discussed so as to build a new bond of friendship and cooperation.[2] The Italian-French treaties of 1900 (the

[1] University of Bari "Aldo Moro".

[2] On Italian-French reconciliation after the fall of the Crispi government and the signing of the 1900 and 1902 treaties: G. VOLPE, *Italia moderna*, Sansoni, Florence, 1973, volume (from now vol.) 2; P. MILZA, *Français et italiens à la fin du XIXe siècle. Aux origines du rapprochement franco-italien de 1900-1902*, Ecole Française de Rome, Rome, 1981, 2 volumes; E. DECLEVA, *Da Adua a Sarajevo. La politica estera italiana e la Francia 1896-1914*, Laterza, Bari-Rome, 1971; E. SERRA, *Camille Barrère e l'intesa italo-francese*, Giuffrè, Milan, 1950; ID., *La questione tunisina da Crispi a Rudinì ed il "colpo di timone" alla politica estera italiana*, Giuffrè, Milan, 1967; L. MONZALI, *L'Etiopia nella politica estera italiana 1896-1915*, Università degli Studi di Parma, Parma, 1996; ID., *The Italians of Dalmatia. From Italian Unification to World War I*, Toronto University Press, Toronto, 2009, p. 203 et seq.; P. GUILLEN, *L'expansion 1881-1898*, Imprimerie National, Paris, 1984; F. TOMMASINI, *L'Italia alla vigilia della guerra. La politica estera di Tommaso Tittoni*, Zanichelli, Bologna,1934-1941, vol. 1; P. PASTORELLI, "Giulio Prinetti ministro degli Esteri (1901-1902)", *Nuova Antologia*, 1996, no.

exchange of diplomatic notes of the 14th to the 16th of December) and of 1902 (the exchange of diplomatic notes of the 30th of June) guaranteed to France the Italian recognition of its rights over Morocco, while assuring the Roman government that the French "would no longer be interested" in Tripoli and Cyrenaica. Another important aspect of the 1902 treaty was the mutual commitment to neutrality in the event of third power aggression.

These agreements were first enforced during the first Moroccan crisis of 1905-1906. Germany, wanting to exploit a moment of weakness in the Franco-Russian Alliance due to the defeat of Russia by Japan, openly challenged the French policy of gradual absorption of the Moroccan territories with the landing of Wilhelm II in Tangier and by demanding that an international conference be held regarding the status of Morocco. In July 1905 France and Germany reached an agreement on the organization of a conference regarding Morocco. The conference began its work in Algeciras in January 1906, with the participation of all the State signatories of the old Moroccan treaty signed in the early 1880s.[3] The Italian governments at the time, led by Giolitti and Sonnino, contrary to German hopes, showed themselves as faithful executors of the Mediterranean Italian-French agreements. They emphasized the maintenance of good relations with Paris while trying to give an honest application to the Italian-French treaties of 1900 and 1902, by doing nothing to prevent the French expansion in Morocco and by giving carte blanche to the mediation efforts of the Italian delegate at Algeciras, Emilio Visconti Venosta. Furthermore, Sidney Sonnino, a friend of the Triple Alliance, confirmed to the French ambassador in Rome, Camille Barrère, that it was his intention to comply with the Mediterranean agreements signed with Paris.[4] In the following months the Rome government resisted German attempts to persuade Italy to more actively support the thesis of Berlin regarding the future of Morocco. However the Italian government refused to support the German proposals on police organization in Morocco and tried to avoid

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2197, pp. 53-70; H. AFFLERBACH, *Der Dreibund. Europäische Grossmacht- und Allianzpolitik vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, Böhlau Verlag, Wien, 2002.

[3] For an overall analysis of Italian policy towards Morocco in 1905-1906 it is always important to consult F. TOMMASINI, *op. cit.*, vol. 2. See also: E. SERRA, *Camille Barrère*, cit., pp. 184-208 ; S. NAVA, *La spartizione del Marocco. Sue vicende politico-diplomatiche*, Marzocco, Florence, 1939, vol. 1, p. 177 et seq.; E. DECLEVA, *op. cit.*; R. NIERI, *Sonnino, Guicciardini e la politica estera italiana (1899-1906)*, ETS. Pisa, 2005, pp. 149 et seq.; L. MONZALI, "Sidney Sonnino e la politica estera italiana dal 1878 al 1914", *Clio*, 1999, no. 3, p. 397 et seq.

[4] *Documents diplomatiques français 1871-1914*, Paris 1929-1959, (henceforth DDF) series II, volume 9, d. 200.

any open intervention in favour of Berlin during the Conference of Algeciras with Visconti Venosta, according to directives that had government approval, seeking to encourage, behind the curtain, a possible Franco-German compromise. The Conference of Algeciras ended on the 7th of April 1906 with the signing of a general act that, while asserting the hegemony of the French and the Spanish at the level of the Moroccan police, stated that, as pointed out by Luigi Albertini, the Moroccan question was not of French concern alone, but of all the state powers.[5] This was a considerable success for German diplomacy, but it was not deemed as such in Germany, where the international isolation of the German government provoked irritation and impatience. In particular Italy was accused by many newspapers and by emperor Wilhelm II himself of having failed to fulfill its obligations of the alliance.[6] These attacks from Germany greatly worried the Italian government. It is the desire to respond to this crisis between Italy and Germany that we can attribute the origin of the request that Sonnino had made to Barrère on the 21st of April 1906, asking him to publish in full and disclose the contents of the Italian-French agreements of 1900 and 1902. This, according to the Italian prime minister, would have clarified the nature of relations between Paris and Rome and set minds to rest.[7] Sonnino's proposal was not applied, partly because of French resistance and partly because of the risk that any negative German reaction would influence Italian foreign policy.[8]

French Diplomacy and the Outbreak of the Italian-Ottoman War

During the first decade of the twentieth century the Italian hopes of a peaceful economic penetration in the Libyan territories slowly faded away, clashing against the Ottoman hostility to any greater Italian influence in those regions. The brief reopening of the Moroccan question, following the Franco-German diplomatic crisis caused by the landing of the German gunboat *Panther* at Agadir in July 1911 – a crisis that was resolved some months later with a colonial treaty of the 4th of November 1911 between France and Germany – gave Italy the opportunity to act in Tripolitania

[5] L. ALBERTINI, *The Origins of the War of 1914*, vol. I, Oxford University Press, London and New York, 1952-7.
[6] On these controversies: DDF, II, 9, dd 25, 36; F. TOMMASINI, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 301 et seq.
[7] DDF, II, 10, d. 29.
[8] DDF, II, 10, dd. 45, 73.

and Cyrenaica.[9] The Rome government expressed full support for the French positions during the diplomatic crisis with Berlin, refusing to support demands of its German ally and adopting benevolent neutrality toward France.[10] At the same time, since July 1911, the Rome government announced to Great Britain and Austria-Hungary that Italy, if provoked by Ottoman hostility, could be forced to wage war to protect its own rights in Tripolitania.[11]

Considering that the 1900 and 1902 treaties had already settled the issue of the French recognition of Italian rights on Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, the Italian government chose not to inform Paris directly neither in advance of its intention to resolve the Libyan question by force, nor to ask France for permission regarding its activities.[12] The French government showed a warm and friendly attitude towards the Italian projects of conquest.[13] On the 20th of September the French foreign minister, de Selves, on his own initiative and before the outbreak of the

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[9] For an analysis of the Libyan question in foreign relations of the Liberal Italy: F. MALGERI, *La guerra libica 1911-1912*, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Rome, 1970 ; L. PETEANI, *La questione libica nella diplomazia europea*, C. Cya, Florence, 1939; P. SILVA, *Il Mediterraneo dall'Unità di Roma all'Unità d'Italia*, Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale, Milan, 1927; L. SALVATORELLI, *La Triplice Alleanza. Storia diplomatica 1877-1912*, Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale, Milan, 1939. On the relation between the Libyan conflict and the origins of the First World War: S. B. FAY, *The Origins of the World War*, The Free Press, New York 1966 (First published 1928-30); L. ALBERTINI, *op. cit.*, vol. 1; P. RENOUVIN, *La crise européenne et la première guerre mondiale*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1948 (First published 1934); B. E. SCHMITT, *The Coming of the War, 1914*, Howard Fertin, New York 1966, (First published 1930); K. HILDEBRAND, *Das vergangene Reich. Deutsche Aussenpolitik von Bismarck bis Hitler 1871-1945*, Oldenbourg, Stuttgart, 1995.

[10] On the Italian attitude during the Second Moroccan crisis: *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani* (henceforth DDI), Rome, 1952-, series IV, volume 7-8, dd. 26, 41, 42, 54, 65, 68, 76, 91, 92, 97, 107, 138; *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914* (henceforth BD), London, 1926-1938, 7, dd. 273, 445; DDF, II, 14, dd. 11, 52.

[11] BD, 7, doc. 445; DDI, IV, 7-8, d. 104; L. SALVATORELLI, *op. cit.*, pp. 397. On German perception of Italian intention to solve by force the Tripolitania question: *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914*, Berlin, 1922-1927 (from now GP), vol. 30, part 1, dd. 10819, 10821, 10822.

[12] Russian diplomacy informed the French government about Italian intentions: DDF, II, 14, docs. 224, 285. Paul Cambon, French ambassador in London, gathered some information in conversations with the Italian representative in the British capital, Imperiali: DDI, IV, 7-8, dd. 122, 150.

[13] DDF, II, 14, d. 341.

Italian-Ottoman war, informed the Italian ambassador in Paris, Tommaso Tittoni, that France would loyally fulfill the agreements that bound the two countries with regard to Tripoliania.[14] Only on the 23rd of September did the secretary-general of the Italian foreign ministry, Bollati, unofficially informed the French chargé d'affaires in Rome, Laroche, that "l'Italie désire obtenir, *en fait*, la situation que toutes les Puissances lui ont reconnue *en droit* en Tripolitaine".[15]

It should be pointed out, however, that if the French government assumed a friendly attitude towards Italian plans, some French diplomats stressed that the war against the Ottoman Empire threatened to provoke a general military conflict and that the Italian conquest of Libyan territories would radically change the political and military balance of power in the Mediterranean benefiting the Triple Alliance.[16]

After the first diplomatic note on the 23rd of September, by which the Italian foreign minister, Di San Giuliano, denounced the alleged threats against the Italians in Tripolitania, the Italian government, on the 27th of September sent an ultimatum to the Ottoman Empire threatening war if this had not been accepted.[17] Faced with the Ottoman refusal, Italy declared war to the Constantinople government and launched the invasion of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.[18]

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[14] DDI, IV, 7-8. Tittoni to Di San Giuliano, September 20. 1911, doc. 174; DDF, II, 14, d. 356.

[15] DDF, II, 14, d. 347.

[16] For instance Louis, the French ambassador in Saint Petersburg: DDF, II, 14, d. 308. See also IBID., d. 353.

[17] DDI, IV, 7-8, d. 240.

[18] DDI, IV, 7-8, dd. 244, 245, 250, 256, 257, 259. On the political origin of the Italian decision to conquest Tripolitania and Cyrenaica: DDI, IV, 7-8, dd. 108, 120-121; GP, 30, part 1, dd. 10841, 10842, 10847, 10848, 10849; *Österreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik von der Bosnischen Krise 1908 bis zum Kriegsausbruch 1914* (henceforth OEU), Wien, 1930, 3, dd. 2585, 2595, 2607, 2654; F. MALGERI, *op. cit.*, p. 97 et seq.; E. SERRA, *I diplomatici italiani, la guerra di Libia e l'imperialismo*, in *Italia e Inghilterra nell'età dell'imperialismo*, edited by E. SERRA, C. SETON WATSON, F. Angeli, Milan, 1990, pp. 146-164; G. FERRAIOLI, *Politica e diplomazia in Italia tra XIX e xx secolo. Vita di Antonino di San Giuliano (1852-1914)*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2007, p. 377 et seq.; G. GIOLITTI, *Memoirs of my Life*, Chapman and Dodd, London, 1923; R. J. BOSWORTH, *Italy, the least of the Great Powers: Italian foreign policy before the First World War,* Cambridge of University Press, Cambridge,New York, 1979. A still very important work on the diplomatic history of the war in Libya is: W. C. ASKEW, *Europe and Italy's Acquisition of Libya 1911-1912*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1942; L. MONZALI, *Italians of Dalmatia*, cit., p. 279 et seq. See also: L. SALVATORELLI, *op. cit.*; G. VOLPE, *op. cit.*, vol. 3; T. W. CHILDS, *Italo-*

The major European powers took an attitude of passive acquiescence against Italian aggression, which was legitimized on the basis of past treaties signed by Italy with various European states, recognizing the rights of Italy to take control of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.[19] France refused to be involved in any possible mediation request by the Ottomans to the great power signatories of the Paris and Berlin treaties of 1856 and 1878, and was accused by Constantinople to have given, with the invasion of Fez, way to the European action of dispossession and conquest of Islamic Africa, and to have provided moral support for the Italian aggression.[20] In the following weeks French benevolence towards Italian aggression manifested itself especially in its reluctance to participate in any mediation efforts between Italy and the Ottoman Empire that were seen negatively by Rome. Paris did not participate in Austrian and German attempts to persuade Constantinople to accept a "Bosnian" solution to the Libyan question, that is letting the Italians occupy and administer the Libyan territories while preserving Ottoman sovereignty,[21] nor supported Ottoman demands to convene an international conference to resolve the conflict between Rome and Constantinople.[22]

Italian reaction to the "Bosnian" solution proposals regarding the Libyan question was the proclamation of the annexation of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica on the 5th of November 1911.[23] The Ottoman government protested against this Italian initiative, proclaiming it null and contrary to the treaties of Paris in 1856 and Berlin in 1878. In fact, in the autumn of 1911 France and Great Britain took for granted the future Italian control of Libyan territories. It was no coincidence that the Italian invasion of Tripolitania started a debate among French and British diplomats on the need to reconsider the nature of relations with Italy after the conquest of

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Turkish Diplomacy and the War over Libya 1911-1912, E. J. Brill, Leiden-New York, 1990; H. AFFLERBACH, *op. cit.*, p. 686 et seq.

[19] Information on this W.C. ASKEW, *op. cit.* On British attitude: BD, 9, tome 1, dd. 250, 251.

[20] DDF, II, 14, d. 361.

[21] GP, 30, part 1, dd. 10883, 10887, 10888; DDF, II, 14, dd. 402, 406, 411, 419; DDI, IV, 7-8, dd. 332, 340, 246, 248, 368, 372. On the Austro-Hungarian attitude toward Italian invasion of Tripolitania and political discussions about the opportunity of attacking Italy or Serbia during the Libya War: OEU, 3, dd. 2655, 2713, 2714, 2738, 2809, 2878, 2932, 2996, 3056, 3108; F. CONRAD VON HÖTZENDORF, *Aus meiner Dienstzeit, 1906-1918*, Rikola, Wien-Berlin, 1921, vol. 2, p. 218 et seq.

[22] DDF, II, 14, dd. 467, 478, 492; T. W. CHILDS, *op. cit.*, pp. 71 et seq.

[23] DDI, IV, 7-8, dd. 410, 411; GP, 30, part 1, dd. 10917, 10918; OEU, 3, d. 2874; G. FERRAIOLI, *op. cit.*, p. 421 et seq.

Libya. The new Italian conquest changed the political set up and the military balance in the Mediterranean and made Italy a great Mediterranean power that needed to be treated with more attention and respect. In late October 1911, the British ambassador in Rome, James Rennell Rodd, said to his French colleague, Camille Barrère, that the possession of Tripoli made Italy more sensitive to the Anglo-French influence and that perhaps the Roman government would have to change alliances. Barrère agreed, deeming that times were ripe for thinking about an agreement between Italy, France and Britain to ensure the integrity of their colonies in the Mediterranean Sea.[24] Even the French ambassador in London, Paul Cambon, and the British Foreign Office under-secretary, Arthur Nicolson, declared themselves in agreement with the assertion that leaving Italy to take control of Tripolitania without a binding agreement for the future with Paris and London was dangerous, giving Germany a chance to transform Italian Libya into a German naval base.[25] In 1912 and 1913 the idea of a Mediterranean triple entente with Italy became a recurring theme of Anglo-French discussions on Italy.[26]

Since the end of December 1911 the Russian government had begun to take steps to play a role of mediator between the warring parties. On the 25th of December, the Russian foreign minister, Sergei Dmitrievich Sazonov, proposed a French or Anglo-French initiative for the conclusion of a ceasefire and the opening of peace negotiations based on the recognition of Italian sovereignty over Libya by the great powers and the withdrawal of Ottoman troops from these African territories.[27] It was an initiative inspired by the will to help Italy which encountered difficulties in coping with the resistance of the Arab population in Libya. The French showed themselves hesitant to take such an initiative. They were afraid of damaging their own positions in the Ottoman Empire. In the following weeks the Russians were very active in proposing either a solution to the Libyan conflict or peaceful mediations by the great powers; proposals characterized by the desire to promote the Italian warring party, guaranteeing it the annexation of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.

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[24] DDF. II, 14, d. 475.
[25] DDF, II, 14, d. 490.
[26] See G. ANDRÉ, *L'Italia e il Mediterraneo alla vigilia della prima guerra mondiale. I tentativi di intesa mediterranea (1911-1914)*, Giuffré, Milan, 1967.
[27] DDI, IV, 7-8, dd. 547, 548, 550, 553, 561, 562; L. SALVATORELLI, *op. cit.*, p. 416 et seq.

Raymond Poincaré and Italian-French relations during the war over Libya

In January 1912 Raymond Poincaré became French prime minister, a position he retained until January 1913.[28] Poincaré was determined to reinvigorate French foreign policy through the strengthening of its alliance with Russia and its political and military cooperation with London. He was mistrustful of Italy's foreign policies, deeming the country unreliable and too closely linked to Germany. Poincaré's rigid and bureaucratic approach to diplomatic activity and his bad personal relationship with the Italian ambassador in Paris, Tommaso Tittoni, complicated the French approach towards Italy even more.[29] Poincaré's distrust was enhanced by the fact that the French government was able to intercept and decode the diplomatic correspondence of the Italian embassy in Paris, which showed close Italian relations with Vienna and Berlin and the Germanophile tendencies of Tittoni.[30] Regarding the Russian proposals of mediation, Poincaré found that it was not in France's interest to take autonomous initiatives in Constantinople. Mediation was possible only if the proposal was made collectively by all the major European powers.

The good relations between Italy and France deteriorated due to incidents caused by the Italian confiscation of the French mail steamers *Carthage* and *Manouba* in January 1912.[31] The difficult task of defeating and taking control of the armed resistance of the Libyan people and of the Ottoman forces stirred a propaganda campaign in Italian newspapers against the complicity and tolerance of French and British colonial administrations of smuggling directly to Libya; the Italian navy decided to force a rigid and strict application of the rights of navigation and

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[28] On Raymond POINCARÉ and his foreign policy during 1912: P. MIQUEL, *Poincaré*, Fayard, Paris, 1961; J. F. V. KEIGER, *Raymond Poincaré*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 132 et seq.; ID., *France and the Origins of the First World War*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1983, p. 56 et seq.; R. POINCARÉ, *Au service de la France. Neuf années de souvenirs*, Plon ed Nourrit, Paris, 1926-1974, vol. 1 e 2.

[29] Poincaré thought that Tittoni was an unreliable and machiavellian diplomat. On this see his *Memoirs*: R. POINCARÉ, *op. cit.*, 1, pp. 44-45.

[30] On Tittoni's hostility toward French foreign policy: DDI, IV, 7-8, dd. 153, 861. See also R. POINCARÉ, *op. cit.*, 1, pp. 55-56.

[31] A lot of documentation published in: DDF, III, 1, dd. 473, 494, 496, 497, 501, 503, 510, 511, 523, 529, 530, 534, 563, 567, 595. See also: DDI, IV, 7-8, dd. 614, 618, 619, 622, 623, 628, 629, 630, 634, 635, 638, 642, 644, 647, 651, 688; W.C. ASKEW, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-159.

inspection on neutral boats. As noted by Askew, the *Carthage* and *Manouba* incidents were regulated and resolved quickly and with good sense by the two governments, but it was an opportunity for the rise of press controversies between the two countries, which showed that the Italian-French friendship was not on firm grounds. On the Italian side, the threatening tones used by Poincaré in the report to parliament on the mail steamers incidents was deemed offensive.[32] Poincaré was wary of Italian foreign policy and viewed negatively the Roman sway between the Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance. Of course, the Prinetti-Barrère agreement guaranteed to France the Italian promise not to attack in case of war and had assured to Paris the possibility to disarm its southern border by strengthening the French military power on the north-eastern border. But the opportunity to read secret Italian diplomatic correspondence passing through the Italian embassy in Paris revealed to Poincaré the intensity of the relationship between Italy, Austria and Germany and urged the Lorraine politician not to give too much "confiance" to the validity of the commitments taken by the Rome government in 1902.[33]

The French ambassador in Rome, Camille Barrère, on the contrary, was convinced that the exchange of diplomatic notes in 1902 was very favourable for France in a military sense. In recent years the Italian army had greatly reduced its presence on the border with France, and had launched an action to strengthen, instead, its own defenses on the border with Austria-Hungary, not only by increasing the number of troops stationed there, but also by developing the system of strategic defence against potential Austrian aggression.[34] Austria, and not France, was now the enemy number one of Italy.

During the first months of 1912 the diplomatic events related to the Libyan war clearly showed the lack of political compactness of the French-Russian Alliance[35] and the diversity of interests and points of view among the powers of the Triple Entente, Russia, France and Great Britain.[36] The war in Libya was seen by the Russian government as an

[32] L. ALBERTINI, *op. cit.*, vol. 1.
[33] DDF, III, 2, d. 218.
[34] DDF, III, 2, d. 280.
[35] On the French-Russian alliance: G. MICHON, *The Franco-Russian Alliance 1891-1917*, Howard Ferting, New York, 1969 (First published 1929); C. DE GRUNWALD, *Les Alliances franco-russes. Neuf siècles de malentendus*, Plon, Paris, 1965.
[36] Regarding the Triple Entente's genesis: G. PEABODY GOOCH, *Before the War. Studies in Diplomacy*, Russell and Russell, New York, 1967 (First published 1938), two volumes; C. ANDREW, *Théophile Delcassé and the Making of the*

opportunity to strengthen its own political influence in the Balkans and in the Near East and led to a clear improvement in relations between Saint Petersburg and Rome. If the Racconigi agreement of October 1909 had long been a dead letter because of Giolitti's (the Italian prime minister) and Di San Giuliano's will to prioritize relations with Vienna, the outbreak of war against the Ottoman Empire prompted Italy to try to revive Italian-Russian cooperation.[37] It was not by chance that between the autumn of 1911 and the summer of 1912 Russia became the strongest supporter and defender of Italian interests and positions, and that all mediation initiatives supported and presented by Sazonov were always blatantly favourable to Italy. Cooperation between Italy and Russia was supported by a close political relationship between Tommaso Tittoni and Aleksandr Petrovich Izvolskij/Isvolsky, both representatives of their countries in France and negotiators of the Racconigi Bargain.[38] Although no longer a foreign minister, Izvolskij continued to significantly influence Russian foreign policy thanks to his close friendship with Sazonov, one of his former subordinates. Sazonov had worked in Italy for some years – he had been a Russian representative to the Holy See between 1906 and 1909 – and was a firm supporter of Italian-Russian cooperation, finding it very useful to

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Entente Cordiale. A Reappraisal of French Foreign Policy, 1898-1905, Macmillan, London, 1968; P. M. H. BELL, *France and Britain 1900-1940. Entente and Estrangement*, Longman, London-New York, 1996.

[37] On the Racconigi treaty and the development of Italian-Russian relations: A. SOLMI, "La guerra libica e il Dodecaneso nei documenti segreti della diplomazia russa", *Politica*, 1924, n. LIV, 3, pp. 193-214, n. LV-LVI, 1-2, pp. 19-45; F. TOMMASINI, *op. cit.*, vol. 4 and 5; G. DONNINI, *L'accordo italo-russo di Racconigi*, Giuffrè, Milan, 1983; E. ANCHIERI, *Costantinopoli e gli Stretti nella politica russa ed europea dal trattato di Qüciük Rainargi alla convenzione di Montreux*, Giuffrè, Milan, 1948, p. 114 et seq.; A. ISVOLSKY, *Au service de la Russie. Correspondance diplomatique 1906-1911*, Les Editions Internationales, Paris, 1937, 1, pp. 266-269, 284-288; *Entente Diplomacy and the World. Matrix of the History of Europe 1909-1914*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1921, docs. 178, 179, 180, 181; *Die Internationalen Beziehungen im Zeitalter des Imperialismus*, R. Hobbing, Berlin, 1934-42, I, 1, d. 312; IBID., I, 2, doc. 80; IBID., I, 3, doc. 32; G. PETRACCHI, *Da San Pietroburgo a Mosca. La diplomazia italiana in Russia 1861/1941*, Bonacci, Rome, 1993, p. 90 et seq.

[38] On this: DDF, III, 3, dd. 55, 70, 75. On Izvolskij's diplomatic activity in Paris during 1911 and 1912 documentation in: *Un Livre noir. Diplomatie d'avant-guerre, d'après les documents des archives russes*, Librairie du travail, Paris, 1922-1932, vol. 1.

keep the Habsburg influence in the Balkans.[39] As Sazonov explained to the French chargés d'affaires, Vieugué, in March 1912

> Il n'entre pas dans mes vues de me brouiller avec l'Italie …; j'ai besoin de rester dans les meilleurs termes avec elle, pour plus d'une raison, et ne serait-ce que pour trouver chez elle un contre-poids vis-à-vis de l'Autriche en Albanie et dans les Balkans.[40]

This Italophile orientation of Russian foreign policy was not agreed with Paris and London and it started to raise concerns in France. Paul Cambon, ambassador in London and one of the best political minds in French diplomacy[41]of that time, noticed that French hostility was not the reason for intensifying relations with Italy, but rather it was the disturbing fact that Sazonov had conducted an independent foreign policy without informing in advance or consulting London and Paris.[42] As already mentioned, the French government was able to intercept and decode the diplomatic correspondence of the Italian Embassy in Paris: based on Italian documents, on the 12th of March Poincaré ascertained the growing political intimacy between Rome and Saint Petersburg. At the same time disturbing rumours were spreading about Russian intentions to declare war against the Ottoman Empire and Poincaré wondered if "Sazonoff ne prepare pas quelque initiative aventureuse pour contraindre la Turquie à la paix".[43] Italian and Russian ambitions to annex the Ottoman territories clashed with the conservative interests of France favouring territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, where French economic and cultural influence was strong.[44] At the end of March and beginning of April news and information began arriving to Paris on political rapprochement and the alliance treaty of the 13th of March 1912 between Serbia and Bulgaria, which was supported by Russia.[45] Fears that Sazonov wanted to take

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[39] On Sazonov: B. JELAVICH, *Russia's Balkan entanglements 1806-1914*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York, 1993, p. 225 et seq.; S. D. SAZONOF/SAZONOV, *Les années fatales*, Paris, 1927.

[40] DDF, III, 2, d. 148.

[41] On Paul Cambon's personality: P. CAMBON, *Correspondance 1870-1924*, Bernard Grasset, Paris, 1940-1946, 3 volumes.

[42] DDF, III, 2, d. 168.

[43] DDF, III, 2, d. 186.

[44] See: DDF, III, 2, d. 214.

[45] On the origins of the Serbian-Bulgarian alliance and the first Balkan war: L. ALBERTINI, *op. cit.*, 1; E. C. HELMREICH, *The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars 1911-1912*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1938; E. C. THADEN, *Russia and the Balkan Alliance of 1912*, The Pennsylvania University Press, University Park

advantage of the war in Libya to prepare the Balkan states to attack the Ottoman Empire began to prove themselves reasonable. These Balkan projects and initiatives, inspired and encouraged by Russia without previous agreement with Paris or London, aroused concern with Poincaré, who strove to control and moderate the Russian government's actions.[46] In fact the Libyan crisis showed that in 1912 within the Triple Entente existed a close diplomatic cooperation between London and Paris, while Russia preferred conducting its own independent foreign policy, reluctant to truly coordinate with the French and the British.

Because of the difficulties in defeating the Arab resistance in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, from April 1912 rumors started spreading that the Italian government was planning military attacks against Constantinople in the Aegean Sea to force the Ottomans to surrender and install peace. After Italian naval blockade actions in the Red Sea and the bombing of the port of Beirut on the 24th of February 1912,[47] there was a widespread belief in Europe that Italy's next step would be to attack the Dardanelles and Constantinople. On the 9th of April Poincaré informed Sazonov that France was opposed to Italian military actions against Thessaloniki or Constantinople.[48] The Russian foreign minister did not share the French position. According to Sazonov, "on n'a pas le droit d'empêcher l'Italie d'y aller puisque le forcement des Dardanelles pourrait être pour elle un moyen de hâter la paix".[49] He denied that a secret agreement regarding the division of the Balkans had been signed between Italy and Russia and promised that the Russian fleet in the Black Sea would not intervene in case of Italian attack on the Dardanelles.[50]

Pennsylvania, 1965; A. DUCE, *L'Albania nei rapporti italo-austriaci 1897-1913*, Giuffrè, Milan, 1983; A. BIAGINI, *L'Italia e le guerre balcaniche*, Ufficio Storico dello Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito, Rome, 1990; H. HANTSCH, *Leopold Graf Berchtold. Grandseigneur und Staatsmann*,Verlag Styria, Graz, 1963, 1, p. 276 et seq; H. AFFLERBACH, *op. cit.*, p. 721 et seq.; R. POINCARÉ, *op. cit.*, vol. 2; J. D. TREADWAY, *The Falcon and the Eagle: Montenegro and Austria-Hungary 1908-1914*, Purdue University Press, West Lafayette, 1983; A. SKŘIVAN, *Deutschland und Österreich-Ungarn in der europäischen Politik der Jahre 1906-1914*, Dölling und Galitz, Hamburg, 1999, p. 255 et seq.; K. BOECKH, *Von den Balkankriegen zum Ersten Weltkrieg. Kleinstaatenpolitik und ethnische Selbstbestimmung auf dem Balkan*, Oldenbourg, München, 1996.

[46] DDF, III, 2, dd. 289, 310.

[47] W. C. ASKEW, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-192.

[48] DDF, III, 2, d. 313.

[49] DDF, III, 2, d. 325.

[50] DDF, III, 2, dd. 325, 327.

Russian Italophilia disturbed the French government, which also knew that Izvolskij had urged the Italians to attack and occupy several Aegean islands.[51] The fear was that the Russians pushed the Italians to expand military conflict in the Mediterranean in order to seize the opportunity to invade the Ottoman territories. On the 27th of April Poincaré met Izvolskij, who confirmed the Russian wish to maintain friendship with Italy, or to continue to follow the so-called Racconigi policy. According to the Russian ambassador, France as well had to be friendlier towards Italy:

> Les intérêts de la Russie et de l'Italie – Izvolskij said to Poincaré– sont identiques en Orient. M. Izvolsky constate avec regret que l'opinion française reste très peu favorable à l'Italie; il en a encore recueilli l'impression hier dans un milieu d'hommes de lettrés et de savants (dîner de XX).[52]

On the 18th of April a squadron of the Italian navy bombed two fortresses on Dardenelles Straits.[53] Between the 28th of April and the 21st of May Italian naval forces occupied Rhodes and several islands in the Aegean Sea, the so-called Dodecanese islands. As a reaction the Ottomans decided to close the Straits of Dardenelles for the ships of neutral states.[54] Italian occupation of the Dodecanese islands aroused concern in France and Great Britain. The French and the British feared that Italy would try to annex the islands.[55] This was unacceptable for Paris and London because it would tilt the political and military balance in the eastern Mediterranean to their disadvantage. According to the French ambassador in Constantinople, Bompard, there was a risk that the Italian occupation of the Dodecanese islands could modify the Mediterranean political balance and that the Italians could strengthen their influence within the Ottoman Empire to the detriment of France:

> L'Italie est, dans le Levant, en opposition avec la France et … ses succès sont obtenus à nos dépens; son action s'exerce en effet sur notre propre terrain, celui de la langue et de la culture intellectuelle. Pendant bien des siècles, la langue et la culture italiennes ont régné en maitresses dans les échelles du Levant; il y a seulement une soixantaine d'années qu'avec la collaboration des missions catholiques, la France a commencé la conquête

[51] DDF, III, 2, d. 347.
[52] DDF, III, 2, d. 390.
[53] DDI, IV, 7-8, dd. 780, 782, 784; DDF, III, 2, d. 361; OEU, 4, dd. 3525, 3534; W.C. ASKEW, *op. cit*, p. 201 et seq.
[54] W.C. ASKEW, *op. cit.*, pp. 212 et seq. On Ottoman reaction to Italian attacks and occupations: T. W. CHILDS, *op. cit.*, p. 133 et seq.
[55] DDF, III, 3, dd. 9, 21, 28, 36, 40.

> intellectuelle du Levant. … Si un chapelet de centres italiens venait à s'égrener le long des côtes de l'Asie Mineur, l'Italie y trouverait, pour son action à l'interieur du pays, un point d'appui redoutable, et Rhodes deviendrait le boulevard de son influence dans le Levant.[56]

According to Bompard, it was necessary, therefore, to prevent Italy from keeping control of the Dodecanese islands.[57] Poincaré understood the risk: the continuation of the Libyan conflict would lead to a general war in the eastern Mediterranean that could not be controlled by the great powers of the Triple Entente without a unified approach. Also in order to block Italian initiatives, on the 24th of May the French government launched the idea of a European conference with the aim to put an end to the war between Italy and the Ottoman Empire. The conference was supposed to be limited to the precise terms of the Italian-Turkish conflict and not to deal with other issues concerning the Near East. Before any final decision the participating powers were supposed to sign a general protocol of "désintéressement".[58] Poincaré's idea was never realized because of Italian opposition[59] and Russian reluctance to participate in a European conference dealing only with Libya without addressing other problems within the Ottoman Empire. According to Paul Cambon, it was difficult to be on the same wavelength with Sazonov on the Eastern question because the Russian minister was reluctant to consider "une solution qui introduirait l'Europe dans un champ d'action que la Russie entend se réserver".[60] There were then the pressures of the Balkan states, eager to gain territories, and the Slavophile and anti-Turkish tendencies of Russian public opinion that influenced the international policy of the Saint Petersburg government.[61]

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[56] DDF, III, 3, dd. 81.
[57] IBID.. See also the remarks of Jules Cambon, French ambassador in Berlin, who deemed Italian expansion in Africa and the Near East dangerous for France: DDF, III, 3, d. 209.
[58] DDF, III, 3, dd. 33, 34. On this some remarks in W.C. ASKEW, *op. cit.*, p. 234 et seq. See also DDI, IV, 7-8, d. 830.
[59] DDI, IV, 7-8, dd. 835, 836, 840, 841.
[60] DDF, III, 3, d. 193.
[61] IBID.

France and the diplomatic recognition of Italian annexation of Libya

During the spring and summer of 1912 the Quai d'Orsay was concerned about the difficulties in finding a common policy with Russia fearing that the Russians were acting too independently and approaching Germany. To seek clarification from the Russian government, Poincaré decided to visit Russia in August 1912. During the talks in Saint Petersburg on the 10th and 11th of August Poincaré forced the Russians to reveal the text of the Serbian-Bulgarian treaty from March and ascertained that Russia had pursued a ruthless policy without first consulting France, trying to find a way to disturb the territorial status quo of the Balkans. The Serbian-Bulgarian treaty, an alliance offensive against the Turks, paved the way for the future war:

> Le traité contient donc – Poincaré emphasised – non seulement une guerre contre la Turquie, mais une guerre contre l'Autriche. Il établit, en outre, l'hégémonie de la Russie sur les deux royaumes slaves, puisque la Russie est prise comme arbitre dans toutes les questions.[62]

Regarding the war in Libya, Sazonov and Poincaré complained about the unfriendly French attitude towards Italy. The French prime minister accused Italy of having provoked the *Manouba*, *Carthage* and *Tavignano* incidents and stressed that France had made many efforts to clear up those misunderstandings. In his notes regarding the meetings with the Russian Foreign Minister, Poincaré remarked with irritation that Sazonov was "visiblement aussi italophile que M. Isvolsky.[63]

Those months showed that there were tensions in relations between France and Russia, but the Italian-Turkish war confirmed as well the existence of an already strong and solid political and diplomatic collaboration between France and Great Britain, based on continuous bilateral consultation. In the summer of 1912 the British were concerned about the future of the Dodecanese and were hostile to a possible Italian annexation of the islands.[64] The London government sent several warnings

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[62] DDF, III, 3, d. 264, enclosure 1, *Entretiens avec M. Sazonoff*. On Poincaré's visit in Russia: L. ALBERTINI, *op. cit.*, vol. 1; G. PEABODY GOOCH, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 176 et seq.; G. MICHON, *op. cit.*, p. 215 et seq.

[63] DDF, III, 3, d. 264, enclosure 1, *Entretiens avec M. Sazonoff*.

[64] On British foreign policy during the war in Libya: C. SETON WATSON, *British Perceptions of the Italo-Turkish War 1911-12*, *Italia e Inghilterra nell'età dell'imperialismo*, edited by E. SERRA, C. SETON WATSON, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-145; C. J. LOWE, *Grey and the Tripoli War, 1911-1912*, *British Foreign Policy under Sir*

to Italy about permanent Italian presence in the Dodecanese islands.[65] France shared British concerns.[66] In fact, during 1912 Paris and London seriously reflected on the opportunity to bind Rome more closely to the Triple Entente with the intention to control Italian military and political activism in the eastern Mediterranean. French diplomacy quickly noticed that the Italian presence in Libya significantly changed the balance of power in the Mediterranean and that perhaps it was better to consolidate relations with Rome by signing an agreement regarding the status of the Mediterranean, either on a bilateral level or with the participation of Great Britain. There was a clear intention to reproduce the type of agreement that had already been signed by France, Italy and Great Britain regarding eastern Africa on the 13th of December 1906, the so-called Tripartite Treaty.[67] As already mentioned, since autumn 1911 the two ambassadors in Rome, the British Rodd and the French Barrère, were convinced that an agreement with Italy was necessary.[68] On the 25th of February 1912 Paul Cambon emphasized that, after the Italian conquest of Tripolitania, France and Great Britain would have to live in Africa with a disturbing and inconvenient neighbour, able to build a large naval base in Tobruk and to allow access to ports and coal deposits to the German fleet. Hence it was necessary to force Italy into an alliance with France and Great Britain.[69] Discussion regarding a possible Mediterranean agreement with Italy intensified after the Italian occupation of the Dodecanese islands. On the 13th of June Paul Cambon wrote to Poincaré that he had had many conversations with the British foreign minister, Grey, to convince him of the importance of tying Italy to the Triple Entente:

> Je lui ai dit que, si nous n'y prenions garde et si nous conservions un ton d'aigreur dans nos rapports avec Rome, nous risquions de voir l'Empereur Guillaume offrir à l'Italie, en Tripolitaine, la garantie de l'Allemagne contre ses deux voisines la France et l'Angleterre, moyennant la concession d'un point sur la côte. J'ai trouvé le principal Secrétaire d'Etat

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Edward Grey, edited by F. H. HINSLEY, Cambridghe University Press, Cambridge, 1977, p. 315 et seq.

[65] DDF, III, 3, d. 252; DDI, IV, 7-8, docs. 957, 960.

[66] DDI, IV, 7-8, d. 1044.

[67] On this: L. MONZALI, *L'Etiopia*, cit.

[68] DDF, II, 14, d. 475; BD, 9, tome 1, dd. 368, 419; W.C. ASKEW, *op. cit.*, p. 246 et seq.; G. ANDRÉ, *op. cit*.

[69] DDF, III, 1, d. 516.

> aux Affaires Étrangères plus attentif que précédemment à ces considerations.[70]

According to Barrère, the conquest of Tripolitania would oblige Italy to devote more attention to the Mediterranean problems forcing it to strengthen its relations with France and Great Britain; it was necessary, however, that this possible Italian approach would be encouraged by a "bienveillante et amicable" attitude in London and Paris.[71] The French ambassador saw the growing British concerns regarding future Italian directions in the Mediterranean and London's hostility to permanent Italian control of Rhodes. In Barrère's opinion, the Italians would fulfill their promises and would withdraw from the Dodecanese; he believed that London's concerns regarding Italy were exaggerated, since he considered Italy to be strategically weak and fragile, completely dependent upon British naval power. The British, though, were not aware of the significant influence that they could exercise over Italy thanks to the history, tradition and geographic position of the country. Italy would remain in the Dodecanese islands only if this was allowed by Great Britain:

> le Gouvernement britannique –Barrère wrote – fera de la politique méditerranéenne de l'Italie ce qu'il désirera qu'elle soit.[72]

Despite the good intentions and the will of both governments to establish a friendly cooperation, relations between Italy and France were characterized by tensions and problems. On the 10th of September the publication of the news that France would move six of its battleships from the port of Brest to the port of Toulon and the speculations regarding a possible future deployment against Italy in case of war between the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente caused a sensation in Italy.[73]

In order to reassure Italian public opinion Poincaré found it necessary to clarify the French policy through direct and sincere talks. The French chargé d'affaires in Rome, Laroche, spoke to Giolitti and Di San Giuliano explaining that the concentration of ships in the Mediterranean was not directed against Italy.[74] There were also French concerns regarding the future of the Dodecanese islands: when peace negotiations between Italy and the Ottomans intensified, concerns grew stronger. In September 1912 Poincaré said to the British ambassador in Paris, Bertie, that if France and

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[70] DDF, III, 3, d. 96.
[71] DDF, III, 3, d. 160.
[72] DDF, III, 3, d. 110.
[73] W.C. ASKEW, *op. cit.*, p. 228 et seq.; DDF, III, 3, dd. 397, 400, 403, 413.
[74] DDF, III, 3, d. 433; W.C. ASKEW, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

Great Britain did not pressure the government of Rome to abandon the Dodecanese islands, Italy would try to keep them indefinitely. British foreign minister, Grey, began to think of a common French-British diplomatic step to warn Italy that London and Paris were against any hypothetical Italian annexation of Rhodes and the Dodecanese islands.[75] The French and British Embassies in Rome convinced the Foreign Office and Poincaré that such a diplomatic note would be seen by the Giolitti government as an unfriendly and threatening act, and could provoke deterioration in political relations.[76] It was decided to act in a less harsh way: Grey and Poincaré spoke informally to the Italian ambassadors in London and Paris to inform Rome of the French-British hostility regarding a future permanent Italian occupation of the islands.[77] Meanwhile the political situation in the Balkans hit boiling point. At the end of September it was clear that Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro were ready to attack the Ottoman Empire. On the 3rd of October the French ambassador in Constantinople, Bompard, announced to Paris that the imminent termination of relations with Bulgaria had made the Ottoman government more flexible in relations with Italy and that a peace treaty with Rome was urgent and necessary.[78] Poincaré pressured the Ottoman government to quickly sign a peace agreement with Italy yielding to the demands of Rome.[79] The Italian-Ottoman peace negotiations were taking place in Ouchy, Switzerland and soon had a breakthrough.[80] On the 15th of October the Italian-Ottoman peace preliminaries were signed in Ouchy,[81] three days later, on the 18th of October, the peace treaty was signed in Lausanne.[82]

On the 2nd of October the Italian Foreign Ministry let Paris know that they would appreciate a full and complete recognition of Italian sovereignty over Tripolitania and Cyrenaica as soon as possible after the conclusion of the peace treaty with the Ottoman Turkey.[83] However, Poincaré was not ready for French recognition without compensation. On

[75] DDF, III, 3, d. 405.
[76] DDF, III, 3, dd. 415, 417
[77] DDF, III, 3, dd. 429, 518, 532; W.C. ASKEW, *op. cit.*, p. 214
[78] DDF, III, 4, d. 27.
[79] DDF, III, 4, dd. 139, 134.
[80] On Italian-Ottoman peace negotiations: T.W. CHILDS, *op. cit.*, p. 160 et seq.; DDI, IV, 7-8, dd. 991, 1000, 1001, 1003, 1023, 1027, 1028.
[81] The text of the preliminary Italian-Ottoman agreement is published in DDI, IV, 7-8, dd. 1066, 1067.
[82] The text of the peace treaty is published in DDI, IV, 7-8, d. 1077.
[83] DDF, III, 4, d. 24.

the 16th of October, the day after the signing of the peace preliminary, Tittoni went to the Quai d'Orsay to communicate the conclusions of the Ouchy agreement, but Poincaré set certain conditions and asked for compensations before the recognition of Italian sovereignty over Libya: he wanted Italy to accept the abolition of the capitulation regime in Morocco and concessions in the economic sphere; then he called into question the final delimitation of the Tunisian-Libyan border.[84] Di San Giuliano complained to Barrère about Poincaré's attitude and emphasized the serious repercussions that the French reservations would provoke on Italian public opinion.[85] Barrère considered the immediate recognition of Italian annexation of Libya to be urgent, but Poincaré was reluctant to abandon his request for preliminary delimitation between Italian and French colonies.[86]

Meanwhile, also on the 16th of October the best Italian friend in the Triple Entente, Russia, decided to recognize Italian sovereignty over Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.[87] After the Ottoman Empire issued firmans as stipulated in the peace preliminaries, on the 18th of October the Italian-Ottoman peace treaty was signed. Austria-Hungary and Germany recognized the Italian conquest the following day.[88] Also on the 19th of October Rodd announced to Di San Giuliano that the British government recognized without reservations or restraints Italian sovereignty over Libya.[89] On the same day the Quai d'Orsay outlined a diplomatic note to recognize French sovereignty,[90] but before the publication of the note Poincaré wanted an agreement to be signed between Italy and France in order to guarantee mutual support for any measures taken by the two powers in Morocco and in Libya and also in order for the most favoured nation treatment clause to be included in the text.[91]

The Italian reaction to Poincaré's demands was not very positive. Giolitti accepted the idea of a treaty but asked for the agreement to be separated and independent from the recognition. Furthermore the new agreement between Italy and France had to be secret because its publication would embarrass Italy in front of the powers which had

[84] DDF, III, 4, d. 179
[85] DDF, III, 4, d. 188.
[86] DDF, III, 4, d. 193. See also J. LAROCHE, *Quinze ans à Rome avec Camille Barrère (1898-1913)*, Plon, Paris, 1948, pp. 288-296.
[87] W.C. ASKEW, *op. cit.*, p. 245.
[88] GP, 30, part 2, dd. 11210, 11211, 11212, 11213.
[89] DDF, III, 4, d. 204.
[90] DDF, III, 4, d. 201.
[91] DDF, III, 4, d. 206.

recognized Italian sovereignty unconditionally and because Giolitti feared that such a treaty would be seen by Italian public opinion as a condition for the French recognition of the domination over Libya.[92] Because of Poincaré's insistence, on the 21st of October Giolitti accepted the idea to publish the Italian-French treaty after it had been signed; but French recognition had to take place before and without formal reservations.[93] Due to Italian pressure, on the 22nd of October Poincaré gave his approval for the publication of the diplomatic note containing French recognition, so the French published it later than the other major powers had. The treaty required by the French prime minister was signed in Paris on the 28th of October.[94]

The diplomatic events regarding the war in Libya did not strengthen relations between Italy and France. French hesitation to recognize the Italian conquest in Libya[95] was a clear mistake on the part of Poincaré and it showed his lack of flexibility and his bureaucratic and rigid political approach; but this was also a sign that France, after all, was worried by the strengthening of Italy's position in the Mediterranean since France viewed Italy as one of Germany's potential military allies. The French government did not support Barrère's attempts to draw Italy closer to London and Paris. The Dodecanese question poisoned relations between Italy, France and Great Britain in the months following the end of the Italian-Ottoman conflict[96] and the Balkan wars prompted Italy to cooperate more intensely with Vienna and Berlin and strengthened the Triple Alliance, while France sided with Russia in the Balkans in order to consolidate the Triple Entente against Germany.[97]

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[92] DDF, III, 4, d. 307.

[93] DDF, III, 4, d. 213.

[94] This is the text of the 28th of October Italian-French agreement, signed by Poincaré and Tittoni in Paris: "Le Gouvernement de la République française et le Gouvernement royal d'Italie, désireux d'exécuter dans l'esprit le plus amical leurs accords de 1902, confirment leur mutuelle intention de n'apporter réciproquement aucun obstacle à la réalisation de toutes les mesures qu'ils jugeront opportun d'édicter, la France au Maroc et l'Italie en Libye. Ils conviennent de même que le traitement de la nation la plus favorisée sera réciproquement assuré, à la France en Libye et à l'Italie au Maroc, ledit traitement devant s'appliquer de la manière la plus large aux nationaux, aux produits, aux établissements et aux entreprises de l'un et l'autre États, sans exception": (DDF, III, 4, d. 275, enclosure).

[95] See Paul Cambon's criticisms of French hesitation to diplomatically recognize the Italian sovereignty in Libya: DDF, III, 4, d. 215.

[96] DDF, III, 4, d. 461; R. SERTOLI SALIS, *Le isole italiane dell'Egeo. Dall'occupazione alla sovranità*, Vittoriano, Rome, 1939.

[97] OEU, 4, dd. 4005, 4045, 4053, 4059, 4276, 4469, 4502; G. FERRAIOLI, *op. cit.*

So it was no accident that the projects of the Mediterranean Entente between Italy, France and Britain were never implemented. In the autumn of 1912, in the aftermath of the Ottoman-Italian war, the British and the French formally proposed to Italy the conclusion of an agreement on the political status of the Mediterranean, but Giolitti and Di San Giuliano left the initiatives from London and Paris unanswered.[98] So Luigi Salvatorelli was right when he noticed that in the aftermath of the war in Libya the Triple Alliance seemed revitalized and the relations between Italy and France weakened. Only the Balkan initiatives of the Habsburg Empire in the summer of 1914 brought the Triple Alliance to a grave crisis and pushed Italy closer to France and the Triple Entente, it was certainly not through spontaneous and autonomous will of the Rome government.[99]

[98] DDF, III, 4, dd. 285, 342, 393, 497, 518; BD, 9, tome 1, dd. 423, 427, 428, 429; G. ANDRÉ, *op. cit.*; W.C. ASKEW, *op. cit.*, pp. 246-247; G. FERRAIOLI, *op. cit.*, p. 535 et seq.

[99] L. SALVATORELLI, *op. cit.*

CHAPTER VII

THE WAR IN LIBYA AND RUSSIA

ALESSANDRO DUCE[1]

Introduction

In order to shed light on Italian-Russian relations during the conflict over Tripolitania and Cyrenaica between Rome and Constantinople in 1911-1912, it is necessary to understand the European context in which it occurred. In the years from the start of the century to the outbreak of the First World War, colonial aspirations continued to pervade the European powers, contracts between countries increased, nationalistic sentiments strengthened, and problems arose to divide the opposing "aggregations," the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente.

In the last half of the nineteenth century, competition among European coloniser states became less intense; however, new settlement projects in extra-continental areas remained to the fore particularly along the North African coast. France still hoped to wrest the control of Morocco from the sultan.

Berlin and Rome in particular were against this project since they did not wish to be left on the sidelines to watch continuing French expansion; such expansion was acceptable only if accompanied by similar concessions in their favour. Berlin had no hesitation in confronting such invasiveness: the emperor himself, Wilhelm II, visited Tangiers (March 1905) where he stated that "no French monopoly" over Morocco would be allowed; freedom of economic and commercial settlement was to be ensured to all the powers. Rome's reaction was more prudent, since Rome had already obtained from Paris an agreement to consider the issues of Morocco and Tripolitania together.

In the Algeciras conference of 1906, called to seek agreement over the future of Morocco, the role of Paris was confirmed as "paramount" even

[1] University of Parma.

though not exclusive. The conference confirmed the sovereignty, independence and integrity of Morocco; "economic freedom" was proclaimed within the country with no inequality; at the same time the powers involved were to outline the reforms necessary to the country and to raise the resources necessary to implement them. Provisions were made for the reorganisation of the police forces and for the control and repression of arms smuggling, for concessions for a state bank, the guarantee of tax returns and the organisation of public services and public works and so on. Most of these reforms were to be carried out under the control of France and Spain. Defined as the General Act for the Affairs of Morocco, this agreement was accepted by the many countries taking part in the Conference (Germany, Austria, Spain, Belgium, the United States, France, Great Britain, Portugal, Morocco, Russia and Sweden). It was evident to all that a final opinion on the results of these agreements could be reached only after they had been implemented. The intention was, however, that Moroccan affairs should be handled jointly, due to the weakness of its government and that of Constantinople. Within this context, the Balkans were also to undergo important changes; the Ottoman Empire was already under strong pressure from the European powers along the North African coastline, and it also had to confront more pressure from Balkan nationalism, the latter with the support of different projects and objectives coming from Austria-Hungary and Russia. The precarious balance of the troubled peninsula was upset in 1908 by Vienna's decision to annex Bosnia-Herzegovina after thirty years of occupation and administration granted under the Treaty of Berlin (1878).

This decision arose from the need to curb Serbian ambitions and to renew support for the prevalent interests in this area in order to reinforce the imperial structure by including other nationalities as well. In this regard, the decision-makers in Vienna underestimated the national factor while attributing an attractive, unifying role to the economic and military powers of the Dual Monarchy. It was also thought that Saint Petersburg, weakened vis-à-vis Tokyo, could do no more than make a diplomatic protest. This belief was strengthened when Berlin came out "without reserve and caution" in support of the annexation enacted. In fact this operation put an end to the friendly relations between Austria and Russia, a deterioration that led to the outbreak of the First World War. Russia had a number of complaints against Austro-German policy; no-one in Saint Petersburg had forgotten that the Reinsurance Treaty engineered by Bismarck had not been renewed by his successors: nor should we forget that the spirit of conciliation evident in the 1887 German-Russian agreements was now a thing of the past. The foreign minister Alexander

Iswolsky utterly condemned the Austrian action which came only a few weeks after the meeting with Buchlau where his colleague Alois Aehrenthal offered the most reassuring guarantees that no decision regarding the two provinces would be taken without a prior agreement between Austria and Russia.

With this move Austria upset the balance in the Balkans and opened a new stage of suspicion and conflict. The Austro-German intrusiveness was distrusted by local nationalisms, by Serbia and by those who were not displeased by the traditional Tsarist policy of protecting the Slavs and Slavism. Thus Austro-Russian rivalry in the Balkans became a three-way rivalry between three great European powers: Austria, Germany and Russia. Although weakened by previous mutilations in Africa and Europe, the Ottoman Empire looked with greater confidence towards the central empires whose decreasing animosity and territorial greed in their regard caused less concern than the Russians and the nationalists on the peninsula. The tsarist protest seeking practical results required the support "of Paris and London even to the utmost consequences"; this however did not come about. According to the two "western" governments, Vienna had obtained a victory that was tactical but not strategic. The shift from a regime of occupation and administration to annexation was symbolic rather than substantial. The Austro-Hungarians in fact already enjoyed an exclusive, privileged role in the two provinces. Indeed this decision made Balkan nationalism more intransigent and accentuated the hostility of Belgrade which now feared military actions. France and Great Britain condemned the unilateral nature of Austria's decisions but remained firm in their belief that Russia's vital interests had not been set at risk: Saint Petersburg acknowledged their solidarity and did not consider it necessary to question either the alliance with Paris or the Triple Entente linking the three countries. Isolation appeared worse than the lack of a common commitment to confront Austro-German arrogance. Saint Petersburg, however, did not forget that it had in the past been forced to seek an understanding with London, an understanding imperilled by the Russo-Japanese conflict of 1904; after the military defeat by Tokyo, it had now come to an agreement with London (1907) thanks to which relations had returned to normal and the most urgent Asiatic issues (Persia, Afghanistan, Tibet) had been defined.

In the light of such results, it hoped for new, more constructive relations with London in the European, Mediterranean and Balkan theatre.

The agreements between Italy and France for Libya and Morocco

Italy also was against the method and timing of this annexation. With no heed for its Mediterranean ally, Vienna strengthened its presence in the Balkans, gaining prestige although the result cannot be considered "strategic"; it was in any case an acquisition benefiting Austria alone with no thought for the needs of the allies. Rome was in fact concerned that Vienna might fail to comply with the guarantees set up in the Treaty of the Triple Alliance; in particular the additional measures undersigned on the first renewal of the Alliance (Berlin, February 1887) should be recalled. On that occasion, the parties to the "additional separate treaty between Italy and Austria" pledged not to alter the "status quo" in the East (the Balkans, and the Ottoman coasts and islands in the Adriatic and Aegean). If this objective proved impossible, the two capitals undertook to find an agreement regarding any "temporary or permanent" occupations on the basis "of the principle of reciprocal compensation for any advantage, whether territorial or of other nature" that either of the parties might obtain. The Italian-German agreement, signed on the same occasion, also provided the government in Rome with an assurance for its expectations; it specifically stated that, should France extend "her sovereignty in any form whatsoever" within the Moroccan empire or in the Tripoli vilayet, Italy could undertake a similar action in these North African territories; should a French-Italian conflict be occasioned by this clash (either in North Africa or in Europe), Berlin and Vienna would be obliged to intervene on Italy's side as laid down in the "Triple Alliance". Furthermore, it stated that once the war was successfully over, Berlin would not oppose any requests from Rome to obtain territorial guarantees from Paris to ensure safe frontiers for the reign and its position as a maritime power. A few years later, when the Triple Alliance was renewed for the second time (Berlin, May 1891), the allies confirmed that they intended to defend the status quo in the East and, should that be impossible, to make any alterations by mutual consent according to reciprocal (Austro-Italian) interests. On the same occasion, they pledged to maintain the status quo in the North African areas of the Mediterranean, i.e., Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and Tunisia. Berlin, always more sensitive to colonial happenings along the southern Mediterranean coast, pledged to support any action Italy should undertake in those areas; in this case also, Germany promised to intervene (with Vienna) beside her ally should a war break out between Rome and Paris, and to back any Italian demands after the war. The "three allies" hoped London would join in this agreement since they believed it

to be in British interests also. In June 1902, when the Triple Alliance was renewed for the third time, Italy obtained Vienna's explicit agreement to refrain from hindering any actions in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, where the Dual Monarchy "had no particular interests to safeguard". This insistence on obtaining a specific undertaking from the allies north of the Alps is clear evidence of Italy's interest in North Africa. On one hand, there is a reiterated mention of occupiable territories, and on the other, the firm determination to ensure Austro-German backing should the decision to occupy be taken with the foreseeable extreme reaction from Paris. In light of this premise and of the specific commitments undertaken by the allies at further renewals of the Triple Alliance, Rome's fears after the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina are quite comprehensible; confirmation of previous commitments was sought and the fact was deplored that Vienna, with no previous agreements, had gone forward unilaterally.

During these years the Italian government actually approached other capitals with which it had no agreements of alliance to seek guarantees against any change in the East.

In 1887 an Anglo-Italian understanding came about (through an exchange of notes between Salisbury and Corti) to ensure the status quo in the Mediterranean, Adriatic, Aegean and Black Sea against any form of "annexation, occupation or protectorate"; Rome declared it was ready to support the British initiative in Egypt while London pledged to support Italy should there be "an invasion on the part of a power" at any point on the North African shore, particularly in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica; they also undertook to ensure "mutual support in the Mediterranean" in any disagreement that might arise between themselves and the other states. An agreement was also reached with Madrid, again in 1887; the latter would not back any solutions in the North African territories "directly or indirectly" hostile to Rome, Vienna, Berlin or "to one or another of these powers". Equal efforts were made to come to an agreement with Paris on the principles of maintaining the status quo or of reciprocal satisfaction with adequate compensation. In the exchange of correspondence (December 1900) between Barrère and Visconti Venosta, a definition of the respective areas of influence took shape: Barrère declared that the interests of the French Republic did not include the Tripoli vilayet or Tripolitania and Cyrenaica; Visconti Venosta acknowledged French rights in Morocco "deriving from the proximity of its territory to that empire"; the Italian minister stated that in the case of political or territorial changes in Morocco, Rome reserved the right to increase its influence in Tripolitania-Cyrenaica, on the grounds of reciprocity. A little later (1902) new agreements between France and Italy took shape concerning Libya,

Morocco and reciprocal neutrality in case of "direct and indirect" aggression; commitments between Barrère and Visconti Venosta in December 1900 regarding North African issues were confirmed. Over the last few decades, the Italian government had in fact been looking in all directions for guarantees for a possible occupation of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania; such assurances were obtained from the allies (Vienna and Berlin) but also from Paris, Madrid and London. Then, faced with Austro-Hungarian activity in the Balkans, relations with Tsarist Russia had to be rethought.

The agreement between Italy and Russia (Racconigi, October 1909)

However different the reactions of Saint Petersburg and Rome, they were in any case against the decision of the Austro-Hungarian minister Aehrenthal.

Saint Petersburg and Rome belonged to two separate alignments (the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente), yet both were critical of their respective allies' decisions; it is true that the reasons behind their reactions were diverse and that tension had increased between Austria and Russia, yet both sought new responses to the imbalance in territories and prestige brought about by Vienna's initiative. No-one imagined, however, that what had happened would lead to the break-off of existing commitments, although it was still considered needful to seek further more general compensation and assurances. Under such circumstances, the rapprochement between Italy and Russia can have been no surprise. A top-level meeting was held at Racconigi in October 1909, in the presence of King Victor Emmanuel III and Tsar Nicholas II; at the end of the talks, the foreign ministers of the two countries agreed on a "benevolent collaboration" in the Balkans, Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, and on modifying existing regulations for transit in the straits of the Black Sea. Tommaso Tittoni and Alexander Iswolsky agreed to work to maintain the Balkan status quo; if that proved impossible, it would be necessary to apply the nationality principle in favour of the Balkan States to the exclusion of "any foreign domination"; neither of the two powers was to take on new commitments for eastern Europe with a third power without the participation of the other. Rome and Saint Petersburg considered "with benevolence" Russian interests in the issue of the Straits and Italian interests in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania. Such arrangements created a new relationship between the two nations, focusing on objectives pursued during the previous period. The agreement did not link the Triple Alliance to the Triple Entente but

simply formed a bridge between Italy and Russia. It was not intended to weld together the parties to the continental alliances already existing; on the contrary, it arose from disappointments, whether major or minor, coming from the parties' own "friends and allies" and was intended to procure external support for those associations to fulfil pressing aspirations in the areas of North Africa and the Balkans, and in military sea transport.

Nor did it open up wide-ranging projects on the European or intercontinental scenario; it was limited both geographically and as to content. Its specific indications give no glimpse of imperial plans or expansionist intentions; indeed they reveal disappointed hopes and fear of their non-fulfilment; the interchanges and understandings hint at feelings of weakness and frustration. This is made even more evident by contemporary research – the two parties to the Racconigi agreement intended to cling firmly to their own positions within their alliance or alignments. Thus the October 1909 agreements between Italy and Russia appear contingent to wider policies in which these actors were not protagonists. These indications appear reactive and defensive and aimed at containing Vienna's Balkan "aggressiveness" and French intrusiveness in Morocco.

This shows the similar attitudes of the two disappointed, humiliated powers: Rome had been forced to acknowledge the determination of France regarding North Africa and that of Austria in Bosnia and Herzegovina while Saint Petersburg had suffered the same humiliation in the two Balkan provinces and still more in the east in her defeat by Japan. With the Portsmouth Treaty (1905) Russia gave up the southern part of the island of Sakhalin, and railway and harbour rights in Manchuria; it also recognised Tokyo's predominant rights, political, military and economic, in Korea.

At Racconigi, Italy and Russia were two countries which had not predominated in the confrontation with the other states either in Africa or the Balkan Peninsula, still less in eastern Asia. An alignment came into being between the two "defeated" nations as a reaction to the unfavourable situation and ensured reciprocal aid for the future.

The Italian ambassador in Saint Petersburg, Giulio Melegari, stressed the positive results of such agreements several times.

Italian-Russian friendship was solid; Aehrenthal "created a chasm between Vienna and the Russians" and undertook a "duel to the death" with Iswolsky, even at a personal level. The latter declared that his country was in favour of "peaceful co-existence among the Balkan states" but would not passively accept the actions of the Dual Monarchy. In

November 1910 the ambassador described the new Russian foreign minister Sergej Sazonoff as a sincere friend to Italy; he was however fearful of a decline in relations with Berlin which feared becoming encircled, politically and militarily; he observed that in Russia public opinion and the press "were very hostile" towards the German world: "there is a racial antipathy stronger than any reasons of state". In June 1911 Melegari informed the foreign minister Di San Giuliano that the Russians intended to maintain and strengthen ties with Rome, ties that had "never been better since the proclamation of the Reign of Italy", and that they were of the opinion that the Italians might also prove a "brake" for Vienna and Berlin. The Russians, however, were beset by one worry: they feared Rome might manage to obtain Balkan compensation in exchange for similar concessions in Vienna. Di San Giuliano denied (September 1911) this likelihood; he urged Melegari to reassure Saint Petersburg that no action in Tripolitania implied any understanding with the Double Monarchy, still less any consequences in the Balkans.

The Italo-Turkish War (1911-1912)

This was the context wherein new difficulties arose in the Balkans with the resurgence of local forms of nationalism hostile to the continuing presence of the Ottoman Empire and the interference of foreign powers. Such activism made itself particularly felt in two periods: 1908-1909 and soon after 1912-1913. During 1908, after the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Belgrade's hostility towards Vienna became more marked; the Serbs took no trouble to hide their expansionist plans, believing they could become the "Piedmont" for most of the Balkan peoples. Constantinople was living through the revolution of the "Young Turks"; while contesting the institutional and political order of the empire, the latter raised expectations in many lands under the authority of the Sublime Porte, which was thus forced to confront a crisis both at home and abroad.

Revolts, turmoil and uprisings shook Macedonia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece, and involved other Arab communities as well. The Mediterranean scenario also entered a new stage of political tension. Continuing French interference in Morocco provoked a reaction on the part of Berlin; the latter was disposed to accept (1909) the effective predominance of Paris in this area but intended to remain free to carry out economic and commercial activities. Faced with "Gallic arrogance", in April 1911 Berlin authorities wasted no time and sent a cruiser to Agadir to highlight their protest and urge new demands. The authorities in Berlin did not exclude

the possibility of allowing Paris to control Morocco but insisted on acquiring compensation in other areas of Africa.

Against this Mediterranean and Balkan backdrop came the Italian decision to open hostilities against the Ottoman Empire (September 1911).

Di San Giuliano underlined the unflagging Turkish enmity towards Italians in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica; in September 1911 he informed the ambassadors that it had become necessary to put a stop to these continuing incidents to secure "the management of the Government and administration of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica for Italy". It was necessary to proceed without waste of time since, should Paris solve the Moroccan issue, it would be yet more hostile and might set aside the 1902 agreements. Italian military action went forward in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, making possible the occupation of Rhodes and the Dodecanese islands. Italy's decision to go to war was not only the result of long-standing diplomatic and military preparations; it was feared that the context, then favourable, might change. It was essential to counteract French intrusion in Morocco, prevent the Turkish government obtaining aid to block the Italian initiative, avoid Berlin seeking points of access in North Africa and counterbalance previous actions by the French in Tunisia and by the English in Egypt.

In Russia, public opinion and the press were favourable to the Italian initiative to restore the balance of power in the Mediterranean. After the outbreak of hostilities, Turkey asked Russia to mediate with Rome; Saint Petersburg refused, considering the proposal "inadmissible interference", as deputy foreign minister Anatolij Neratoff told Melegari at the beginning of October. After Russia's refusal, Turkey worked towards a conference of the European powers; Rome feared that the Russians would take part in order to avoid leaving any negotiations solely in the hands of London, Vienna and Berlin. Melegari was alarmed (November 1911) but the danger quickly passed. There was an intensive exchange of ideas in that period between Tommaso Tittoni and Alexander Iswolsky, both ex-foreign ministers and both at that time ambassadors for their respective countries in Paris.

Iswolsky denied that Russia might negotiate the issue of the Straits with Turkey as an anti-Italian *quid pro quo* for Cyrenaica and Tripolitania; any Turkish-Russian negotiation, said Iswolsky, would take place only at a later time, should Constantinople require Russian aid in the Balkans. For his part, Neratoff himself assured Melegari (November 1911) that his country's position had not changed nor would Ottoman attempts to obtain funding be successful: "no Turkish loan will succeed on the Russian market". Sazonoff confirmed that Russia was well-disposed towards the Italian action; he

invited Rome to complete occupation of Tripolitania and to put an end to the conflict; he reminded Melegari (December 1911) that it was necessary to move with speed since Austria-Hungary might well seize the chance to proclaim its own protectorate in Albania. Melegari asked if Russia would be willing to bring together the other European powers in order to exert pressure on Turkey to achieve peace. Sazonoff's reply was negative; Turkish resentment regarding such pressure would be aimed at Saint Petersburg; it would be better to ask Paris to fund Constantinople.

Sazonoff feared that "a long war" would have consequences on the balance of power in Europe and outlined a compromise solution: Rome could "occupy" Libya without going as far as a formal annexation; he stated that Turkey at that moment could not accept "a peace treaty which would be lethal". This hypothesis was refused (December 1911) by Melegari; an armistice without peace would prove highly dangerous for Italy; the protectorates obtained by France in Algeria and Tunisia were not comparable, for in those cases Turkey had not recognised the dominance of Paris yet had not opposed the protectorates. Sazonoff (January 4. 1912) suggested a further solution: to avoid undergoing the humiliating loss of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, Turkey might concede independence, abandoning them to their fate, with no concession in favour of Rome. None of these solutions was set in place: the war went on. Russia lost no occasion to demonstrate its friendship and loyalty towards Rome. In March 1912 Sazonoff informed the Italian chargé d'affaires in Saint Petersburg, Pietro Tomasi della Torretta, of a diplomatic move by England to obtain Russian support in bringing pressure to bear on Italy to induce the latter to stop operations in Libya: some mention was made of the Russian aspirations for the Dardanelles; France also made similar proposals in reference to the Dardanelles, the Syrian coast and the Aegean Sea. Sazonoff stressed that he had confirmed the most rigorous "Russian neutrality", even going as far as to describe the English move as "indecent". Shortly after this episode, Saint Petersburg withdrew its ambassador in Constantinople, Nikolaj Tcharikoff; he was attributed with having taken personal and incorrect initiatives, one of which was his failure to back Russian proposals for a peace between Italy and Turkey with sufficient force. With regard to this issue, the Russian government laid aside the idea of any solution involving an armistice, opting in favour of a peace treaty while urging that Rome should ensure Constantinople adequate compensation, both material and religious. Regarding the show of strength put on by the Italian navy, (the "exploration" of the Dardanelles and the naval display in the Aegean), Sazonoff (April 1912) stressed the crisis of the Ottoman state and the errors of its governing

authorities which had turned a deaf ear to constructive proposals from the Russians in previous months; the closure of the Straits had been a hasty, useless decision since the Rome's government had never considered occupying them. In his speech to the Duma on April 23. 1912 Sazonoff confirmed that the Racconigi agreements were valid and expressed hopes for a peaceful development in the relations among the Balkan states and with the Ottoman Empire, adding that the conflict under way in Libya "did not touch upon the interests of neutral countries". Saint Petersburg had for some time been working to convince the contending nations to reach a fair peace, and also demanded that the Straits be reopened immediately, since the Italian manoeuvres in the Dardanelles had been simply demonstrative: the fleet had by then returned to Italy.

In order to enable navigation between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea to return to normal as soon as possible, Saint Petersburg believed that the powers involved should together approach the Ottoman government. In August 1912, after a further political crisis in the country, a new government took power in Turkey and proved more inclined to seek peace with Italy. The chargé d'affaires Tomasi della Torretta reported that if the war in Libya came to an end, Russia would immediately recognise Italian sovereignty; it did not intend to wait for a similar decision from France and England while it would take into consideration advising these governments to take similar action. Saint Petersburg wished to be informed of any possible truce or peace agreement before any other government ("at least half a day").

The Treaty of Peace

The preliminary peace agreement between Italy and Turkey was signed on October 15 at Ouchy (Lausanne); at the same time a "separate, secret declaration" was signed in which the royal Italian government pledged to approve the principle of the Ottoman Empire's territorial status quo both in the Balkans and in the Mediterranean. The peace treaty was signed in the same place on October 18, laying down Tripolitania and Cyrenaica's independence from the Ottoman Empire, cessation of hostilities and the exchange of prisoners, and an amnesty for the Arab peoples who had taken part in the war; Italy was to pay a yearly sum to indemnify Turkey, and the future presence in the two provinces was guaranteed of a religious representative of the caliph's. The annexation of the two provinces of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica was thus made official; they were known as Libya, from the old Roman name.

The annexation to the Reign of Italy of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica had been proclaimed in November 1911, although military operations were still under way.

The Aegean Islands occupied by the Italians during wartime operations were to be returned to Turkey after the Ottoman troops had moved out of Libya; in fact this "temporary transfer" of the Dodecanese islands was protracted until the end of the Second World War when they passed under Greek sovereignty. The annexation of Libya was rapidly recognised by all the major European powers (Russia, Austria, Germany, Great Britain and France). Italy, which considered itself "the most Mediterranean" of the European countries, thus saw its aspirations crowned after so long.

This expansion appeared more suited to the needs and position of Italy in the "mare nostrum" than those achieved in eastern Africa; there was some satisfaction in no longer being mere "spectators" to the North African ball-game but taking part as "actors and protagonists". It must not be forgotten that during the last decades of the nineteenth century, Italian political and military circles had envisaged the hypothesis of a colonial "inner African" penetration to connect possessions in East Africa with Libya (Ethiopia, Sudan, Libya); this would open up land routes linking Italian possessions from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea.

Conclusions

The Italian operations in 1911-1912 benefited Russia as well by weakening the Ottoman forces defending European possessions. Saint Petersburg diplomacy worked frenetically to conciliate the Balkan states and local national movements; although united by a common aversion to Vienna and the Ottoman Empire, they were divided by ethnic factors, land claims and religious elements. The efforts of the Russian government were at first directed towards forming "a Christian federation in the Balkans" to co-exist with the Ottoman Empire; in these circumstances the Russians naturally pressed for a revision of the rules regulating navigation in the Straits (the route for warships). Russian hopes of mediating between the Christian states in the Balkans and Constantinople were to be disappointed.

The quadruple Balkan alliance (Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Greece) opened hostilities (1912) against the Turks. Faced with this situation, Saint Petersburg supported the cause of the Balkan peoples in order to aid them to free themselves of Ottoman domination, recuperate an important political role after the humiliation undergone in 1908 with the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and achieve a stronger position to revise the regime governing navigation in the Straits. The war favoured the

Balkan states: Constantinople, after being forced to make peace with Italy in October, was compelled in December 1912 to capitulate to its Balkan adversaries. In the London Conference (1913) Turkey lost its European lands although maintaining part of Thrace. The peace with the Ottoman Empire did not stabilise the situation: after a few months, failure to agree on the split-up of Macedonia sparked a conflict among the Balkan allies. Bulgaria went to war with Serbia and Greece and later also with Romania. In this bewildering scenario of pacification and war, Serbia and Greece finally obtained much of Macedonia (with a limited area going to Bulgaria), Romania annexed Silistra and Turkey succeeded in re-occupying Adrianopolis. What is the overall picture emerging from the trials of strength of this period? Turkey, although reduced in size, kept a foothold in Europe. The weakening of the Ottoman government in Europe and Africa highlighted the growing strength of Arab national forces hostile to the Ottomans, who would later have to face the "new European colonisers".

All these circumstances made Turkey reinforce its relations with Vienna and Berlin. Greece had expanded, acquiring most of Macedonia, Thessaloniki, Crete and the central Archipelago; backed by London, it also claimed the Aegean islands, temporarily occupied by the Italian forces. Having obtained part of Macedonian territory, the Serbs were nurturing expectations for the "Great Serbia"; protected by Russia, they believed they could be the driving force for all the "Yugoslav" national movements against Vienna; herein the reason for the increasing tension between Austria and Serbia that was to lead to Sarajevo. The state of Albania was born of the agreement between Rome and Vienna, and was later to come under Italian influence and be occupied in 1939.

During the Italian-Turkish conflict, France obtained the protectorate of Morocco (March 1912); the clauses agreed upon with the Sultan enabled Paris to introduce all the reforms it held necessary for the development of the country: administrative, judicial, scholastic, economic, financial, and military; it was to proceed with the military occupation of territories to guarantee the order and "the security of commercial transactions"; no act of international standing was to be concluded by Morocco "without previous consent" from France. Paris would uphold the practice of the Islamic religion and the religious institutions as well as "the Sultan's traditional prestige; it would protect the latter's person and 'his throne'; the same support would be furnished to the heir to the throne and his successors".

All this did not alter the main relations among the great powers, nor did it break the alliances or the understandings linking each to the others;

even the connections between Italy and Russia springing from the Racconigi agreements did not undergo significant developments. Having gained control over Libya and international recognition of the annexation, Rome remained within the Triple Alliance; at the end of 1912 it renewed the link with Vienna and Berlin two years early. Italy made no secret of its intentions to keep control over Rhodes and the other Dodecanese islands nor of the fact that Italian eyes were set on Adalia, a region in Asia Minor. In 1913 Italy and Austria signed specific naval agreements to reinforce the existing alliance from the naval point of view as well (common plans of action, the deployment of the fleets across the Mediterranean, the use of ports, the concentration of vessels, the definition and sharing of command); the German navy also deployed a number of vessels in the Mediterranean. These political and military decisions show that during the two years 1912 and 1913 the Italian government believed that its own interests could be best guaranteed under the Triple agreements. Russia gained indirect results from the events in Africa and the Balkans at this time; the weakening Ottoman Empire, the strengthening Balkan states, and the firm Serbian friendship held positive prospects for Saint Petersburg regarding both Vienna and Constantinople. Despite this, however, there were no immediate practical results although the groundwork for future developments had been laid. It was no surprise that the Tsar maintained an ally's relation with Paris and strengthened the existing relations with London after agreements defining their respective areas of influence in Asia. Saint Petersburg was ever mindful of France's commitment to support Russia in the case of Austro-German aggression; nor could it ignore the fact that London, after the failure of talks with Berlin on naval armaments, was drawing closer and closer to France. Thus the Triple Entente lost none of its strength; even London and Paris (1913) drew up naval agreements under which the French fleet was given overall patrol of the Mediterranean and the English fleet that of the North Sea. There was a singular similarity between the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente in their handling of land and sea security and likewise in the speed of their defensive action after the changes in North Africa, the Balkans and the Mediterranean. With regard to the overall picture still existing in 1913, the most notable disparities occurred over the next two years: Italy distanced itself from the Triple Alliance and the Ottoman Empire adopted Austro-German policy. Thereafter Rome and Saint Petersburg found themselves allied against the central empires until the outbreak of the October Revolution in 1917.

CHAPTER VIII

THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE ITALO-TURKISH WAR IN BRITISH DOCUMENTS

MASSIMILIANO CRICCO[1]

Introduction

Since 1881, after the French conquest of Tunisia, the aims of the Italians were directed towards the Mediterranean coast of Libya, as a sort of "consolation prize" for the loss of Tunis, where Italy has had for a long time a large and active community.

Even after the defeat at Adowa in 1896, the Tripolitania and Cyrenaica conquest was one of the Italian government's highest priorities, so Rome did her best to get a number of guarantees from the European powers on the interest to the Italian Libyan provinces of the Ottoman Empire, and especially the *vilayet* of Tripoli.[2]

In this framework, the Prinetti-Barrére agreement with France of 1902[3] was important, but the Italians were well aware that it was not sufficient to realise their designs if Great Britain, which had the Mediterranean's most

[1] University of Urbino "Carlo Bo"

[2] For the Italian foreign policy in the Mediterranean before the First World War see, for example, C. SETON-WATSON, *Italy from Liberalism to Fascism, 1870-1925*, II Ed., Methuen, New York, 1981; G. ANDRÉ, *L'Italia e il Mediterraneo alla vigilia della prima guerra mondiale*, Giuffré, Milan, 1967.

[3] On the occasion of the June 1902 renewal of the Triple Alliance between Austria, Germany and Italy, to ensure Italian freedom of manoeuvre principally in the Mediterranean, the Italian foreign minister Giulio Prinetti presented a note to the French ambassador Camille Barrére, assuring him that if France should be attacked by one or two powers, then Italy would remain neutral. In the exchange of notes of 30 June the French ambassador promised reciprocal neutrality in similar events and a reciprocal recognition of Italian claims in Libya and French claims in Morocco was also included. For more details, see C. SETON-WATSON, *op. cit.*, pp. 329-333.

powerful fleet, did not agree. Therefore the government of His Majesty, who had hitherto followed the so-called "free hands" policy, was reluctant to make statements about challenging the Mediterranean area, which they considered of vital importance.[4]

The news of the agreement with France, however, broke the hesitations and the British Secretary of State, Lord Lansdowne, released the following statement to the Italian foreign minister, Giulio Prinetti:

> His Britannic Majesty's Government have no aggressive or ambitious designs in regard to Tripoli …, they continue to be sincerely desirous of the status quo there, as in other parts of the coast of the Mediterranean and, … if at any time an alteration of the status quo should take place … such alteration should be in conformity with Italian interests. This assurance is given on the understanding and in full confidence that Italy on her part has not entered and will not enter into arrangements with other Powers in regard to this or other portions of the Mediterranean of a nature inimical to British interests.[5]

In parallel with diplomatic actions, the Italian government also began to implement economic strategies to achieve what was defined in political debate as "peaceful penetration" through the initiatives of the Bank of Rome, which in 1907 established an agency in Tripoli and started to support Italian commerce, small-scale industries and shipping lines in the territory.[6] In particular, the Bank was promoting, as Francesco Malgeri states, a "silent and gradual absorption of the provinces, the soft annexation, the conquest without firing a shot"[7] of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.

The Ottoman Empire was strongly suspicious of the agency, which was essentially a sort of governmental department and it was no mystery that the Bank of Rome's economic activities were a cover for political penetration. By 1910, Italy took second place in Tripoli's foreign trade and the Italian population there grew by over 1000 residents. The more the Italian economic influence grew, the more antagonistic became the attitude

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[4] See F. H. HINSLEY (ed.), *British Foreign policy under Sir Edward Grey*, Cambridge U.P., 1977; T. G. OTTE, *Reflections on the Foreign Office before 1914*, in G. JOHNSON, *The Foreign Office And British Diplomacy In The Twentieth Century*, Routledge, London, 2005, pp. 31-52; E. SERRA, *L'intesa mediterranea del 1902*, Giuffré, Milan, 1957.

[5] *British Documents on the Origins of the War* (henceforth B.D.O.), vol. I, pp. 360-1.

[6] C. SETON-WATSON, *op. cit.*, pp. 364-5.

[7] F. MALGERI, *La guerra libica (1911-1912)*, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Rome, 1970, pp. 17-18.

of the Turkish authorities.[8]

Just between 1910 and 1911 Turkish hostility to the Italian initiatives became the pretext of a nationalistic campaign calling for stronger action in favour of Italian companies in Tripoli. On March 1. 1911, the 15th anniversary of the Adowa defeat, Enrico Corradini published the first number of a new weekly, *L'Idea Nazionale*, organ of the Nationalist movement, whose first Congress was held in Florence in December 1910. From the columns of *L'Idea Nazionale* the same Corradini, together with other members of the movement such as Luigi Federzoni, Maurizio Maraviglia, Roberto Forges Davanzati and Francesco Coppola launched a powerful press campaign for the conquest of Tripoli.[9]

The new foreign minister of the Luzzatti Government, Marquis Antonino Di San Giuliano, took office on April 1. 1910 and made of Italian influence in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica a point of honour in his political action.[10] He had on several occasions emphasised that military action against the Ottoman Empire, which Italy would have shortly launched, was nothing more than "the epilogue of a long series of persecutions and abuses … on Italy and Italians by the authorities of the Ottoman Empire".[11]

While the nationalists and Di San Giuliano – who served as foreign minister until his death in 1914 – insisted on the necessity of the war against Tripoli and Cyrenaica, Giovanni Giolitti, who returned as prime minister on March 30. 1911, appeared to be much more cautious in the statements that he made regarding a possible conflict between Italy and Turkey to seize the Libyan provinces.

Giolitti was well aware of the Eastern Question, which saw the Ottoman Empire, already described in the nineteenth century by Tsar Nicholas I of Russia as "the sick man of Europe", on the brink of imminent collapse, which would throw Europe into chaos, triggering the appetites of the Russians for gaining control to the Straits and provoking Anglo-French disputes on the eastern Mediterranean.

The Agadir Crisis on July 1. 1911, paving the way for the French conquest of Morocco, launched a major blow to the hesitation of Giolitti who had to consider seriously, for the first time, the realistic possibility of

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[8] C. SETON-WATSON, *op. cit.*, pp. 363-4.
[9] F. MALGERI, *op. cit*., pp. 37-40.
[10] For more information about Marquis Antonino Di San Giuliano, see G. FERRAIOLI, *Politica e diplomazia in Italia tra XIX e XX secolo. Vita di Antonino Di San Giuliano*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2007.
[11] B.D.O., vol. IX, pp. 360-1.

a colonial enterprise in Libya.[12] The main consideration that brought the reluctant Giolitti to the decision to embark Italy on a war immediately after the Agadir Crisis was the clear perception that the balance of power in the Mediterranean had been disturbed, and to the detriment of Italy. Rome felt that if she did nothing, the Mediterranean would soon become a "French lake". The Italians were persuaded that they should get compensations, and they would take them in Tripoli, the only place left in North Africa for Italian control.

Before beginning the precipitous action against the Ottoman Empire that led to the declaration of war on September 28, the Italians were very careful to weave a dense network of conversations with the powers most attentive to developments in the Mediterranean, first of all with England, who was the first country to be contacted by Italy on the question of Tripoli in the summer of 1911.

The Italian Quest for British Consensus to the Tripoli war

As of July 3. 1911, the Italian foreign minister began to seriously advise the British ambassador in Rome, Sir Rennel Rodd, that if "in the early future, there should be any occasion for the Powers to exert pressure on Turkey, Italy would welcome the opportunity to make a demonstration in Tripoli" [13] and added that Italians living there would be ensured immunity from persecution to which they may find themselves subjected.

On July 26, Guglielmo Imperiali di Francavilla, Italian ambassador in London, went to the Foreign Office to see the British foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, to complain about the increasing hostility of the Turks towards Italians in Tripoli.

Especially the diplomat complained that Italians had recently been prohibited from buying land in Tripoli, while the Germans could buy as much as they pleased, and he also envisaged the immediate exclusion of Italian firms from contracts for the construction of port of Tripoli. The behaviour of the Ottoman Empire, according to Imperiali, was beginning

[12] For more information about the Agadir Crisis and its consequences, see: M. L. DOCKRILL, *British policy during the Agadir Crisis of 1911*, in F. H. HINSLEY (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 271-87.

[13] T. L. B. O' NEILL, *British Policy in the Italo-Turkish War*, MA Thesis in Arts, Mc Gill University, Montreal, Canada, 1948, p. 36.

to irritate even the Italian press and public opinion regarding the Libyan issue.[14]

Grey's reply was consistent with the British foreign policy towards Italian initiatives in Libya, as remarked by the Foreign Secretary in a letter sent to the British ambassador in Rome, Sir Rennel Rodd:

> I affirmed that I desired to sympathise with Italy, in view of the very good relations between us. If it really was the case that Italians were receiving unfair and adverse economic treatment in Tripoli - a place where such treatment was especially disadvantageous to Italy - and should the hand of Italy be forced, I would, if need be, express to the Turks the opinion that, in face of the unfair treatment meeted [sic] out to Italians, the Turkish Government could not expect anything else.[15]

Sir Grey's remark reassured the Italians that they could depend on the sympathy of Great Britain, but this convincement was a sort of misunderstanding, because the Foreign Secretary's attitude towards an eventual Italian enterprise in Libya was that it was extremely dangerous. British interest in Libyan provinces was negligible, as shown by the previously mentioned Lansdowne statement of 1902, but Grey's prudence on the question was aroused by two main considerations, as remarked by C. J. Lowe

> The complexities of the Italian position straddling the Triple Alliance-Triple Entente confrontation were such that any sudden shock might upset the delicate European equilibrium and bring war. Equally, the longer the war dragged on, the grater the temptation to the Balkan states to utilise this opportunity to del Turkey a death blow, with incalculable consequences in view of Austro-Russian interests.[16]

Finally, at the time of Imperiali's visit, Edward Grey thought the best British policy in this struggle lay in maintaining strict neutrality.

The government of Rome, however, felt this was enough to know that it could depend, in the case of an intervention in Tripolitania, on the benevolence of the British and this led Di San Giuliano to take other steps, such as replacing the Italian consul general in Tripoli and the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Italy in Constantinople simultaneously.

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[14] See F. CRESTI, M. CRICCO, *Storia della Libia contemporanea. Dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, Carocci, Roma, 2012, pp. 49-60.

[15] B.D.O., vol. IX, d. 221, Sir E. Grey to Sir R. Rodd, Foreign Office, London, July 28. 1911, p. 264.

[16] C. J. LOWE, *Grey and the Tripoli War, 1911-1912*, in F. H. HINSLEY (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 315.

This fact was not unnoticed by Sir Rodd, described by Malgeri as a "shrewd and keen observer", [17] and the British ambassador asked the Italian foreign minister if these changes implied "a definite alteration of Italian policy towards Turkey". [18] Di San Giuliano said that the government had been forced by public opinion, in solidarity with the Italians who were seen being denied their rights in Tripoli, and added that if the situation remained so tense, sooner or later Italy would be obliged to take action, concluding, however, that:

> He trusted that would not be the case and his anxiety on this point was fully shared by the President of the Council. But it seemed to be impossible to convince the present régime in Constantinople that there was a limit to what the dignity of the Italian nation would endure in their policy of pin-pricks.[19]

The twofold attitude of the Italian foreign minister, that neither admit nor deny Italian intention to occupy Tripoli, allowed Sir Rodd to arrive at the conclusion that:

> The Banca Romana had made large investments in commercial enterprises in Tripoli, and was no doubt to some extent behind the active propaganda which was being carried on in the press of this country in favour of more drastic action. If France established fixity of tenure in Morocco this current of public opinion would acquire such force that it might become difficult to resist the pressure. I observed that any such action as certain sections of the press of this country appeared to contemplate would involve Italy in immense and obvious difficulties and that from the character of its population Tripoli constituted a dangerous hornet's nest to disturb.[20]

In the first half of August, the problems of the Italians in Tripoli escalated and there were some accidents, so that Grey wrote an important letter to Rodd on August 16, which expressed the intention of the British to do everything possible to help Italy from a diplomatic point of view:

> It would, I thought, be much better that we should show our good-will to Italy by giving her our diplomatic support in Constantinople if she had occasion to protest against Italian interests being treated by the Turks in

[17] F. MALGERI, *op. cit.*, p. 108.
[18] B.D.O., vol. IX, d. 222, Sir R. Rodd to Sir E. Grey, Rome, July 31. 1911, p. 264.
[19] IBID., p. 265.
[20] IBID.

> Tripoli more unfavourably than those of other Powers.[21]

In the space of two weeks, on August 30, the Foreign Office informed Sir Gerard Lowther, British ambassador to Turkey, about the conversation that had taken place between Sir Edward Grey and ambassador Guglielmo Imperiali on July 26 on the question of Tripoli and instructed him to advise the Turkish minister of foreign affairs, Rifaat Pasha, that "in regard to foreign competition for concessions in Tripoli … His Majesty's Government understands the complaint from the Italian Government to be that they receive less favourable treatment in Tripoli than other nations"[22] and, therefore, Turkey could not count on the United Kingdom in the current situation.

At this point, while the Italian diplomacy secured her position *vis-à-vis* of other European powers, the government began to prepare for war and Giolitti asked the chief of staff of the Italian army, General Alberto Pollio, to take into consideration the hypothesis of an occupation of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica and to estimate the number of soldiers and the amount of equipment required to accomplish the missions efficiently.

The number was first estimated at 20,000, then increased to 35,000 troops, due to the Italian government's intention that Tripoli should be occupied with such a display of force to induce the Turks to come to terms more easily.[23]

On September 4, according to Ambassador Rodd,

> The Italian Capital retains its usual deserted summer aspect. Ministers assemble once a month for a Cabinet Council, and then hastily disperse again to baths and mountain stations. ... The Minister for Foreign Affairs has made no concealment of his view that a modification of the Act of Algeciras would restore to Italy full liberty to act as seems best to her in her own interests ... [to] obtain a compensation.[24]

The leading Italian politicians, in fact, from the prime minister and foreign minister, were at sea, in the mountains or at the spa in order to flaunt indifference to the question of Tripoli, which was getting worse, and to avoid direct confrontation with the press and the diplomatic

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[21] IBID., d. 93 (Comm.), Sir E. Grey to Sir R. Rodd, London, Foreign Office, August 16. 1911, p. 266.
[22] IBID., d. 238, Sir E. Grey to Sir G. Lowther, Foreign Office, August 16. 1911, p. 267.
[23] T. L. B. O' NEILL, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
[24] B.D.O., vol. IX, d. 224, Sir R. Rodd to Sir E. Grey, Rome, September 4. 1911, p. 267.

representatives of foreign powers. As Giovanni Giolitti wrote, the ploy was "to dispel [the] Turkish government's suspicions" about the real Italian intentions so that Constantinople was "taken by surprise by our ultimatum".[25]

On September 14, the ambassador had the opportunity to meet minister Di San Giuliano, just before he came back to Anticoli, officially "to finish his cure", but in reality – as Rodd wrote to Grey – "his real object in returning to Anticoli [was] to be at so critical a moment as the present, near the Prime Minister, who is undergoing the cure at those waters, and also to be out of the way of importunate questioners."[26]

Di San Giuliano spoke openly with the British ambassador about the strong campaign which the Italian press had started in favour of an action in the Libyan provinces of the Ottoman Empire and said him that:

> The Turkish chargé d'affaires [saw] him ... and asked him ... to issue an announcement on behalf of the Italian government to the effect that they dissociated themselves from the objects advocated in this press campaign. He had replied that ... [Italian] policy towards Turkey had been defined in his statements in the Chamber, and he had nothing to add to them. ... As regards the press generally there existed in Italy the principle of absolute liberty and the government could not control its opinions ... His Excellency, however, admitted to me that the opinion thus generally manifested was very strong and almost unanimous.[27]

The minister's last sentence led the ambassador to conclude that:

> In my Opinion, if the [Italian] government make up their mind to find such an excuse, the probability is that a *coup de main* would follow, and that the Powers may be confronted with a *fait accompli*, before Turkey has had time to organise resistance or other states to formulate reserves and objections".[28] He was really right.

The last step of the Italian government was a request for consent to declare war addressed to the king, who signed all the necessary permissions in Racconigi on September 17, during a private meeting with Giolitti. Then, the Italian prime minister telegraphed to Di San Giuliano to speed up preparations for the conflict in agreement with General Pollio, but everything had to be done with great caution and secrecy. Despite the

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[25] G. GIOLITTI, *Memorie della mia vita*, F.lli Treves, Milan, p. 229.
[26] B.D.O., vol. IX, d. 227, Sir R. Rodd to Sir E. Grey, Posilipo [sic], September 14. 1911, p. 270.
[27] IBID.
[28] IBID., p. 271.

secrecy, however, on September 18 it began to be understood abroad that the Italians were about to occupy Tripoli[29], which caused considerable apprehension, especially in Constantinople, where the British ambassador, Sir Gerard Lowther sent a dispatch to the Foreign Office in which he referred that:

> There is no doubt an increasing nervousness in government circles regarding Italian action in Tripoli, and I understand that what the government fear is that the people may establish a boycott of Italian goods which might easily produce an unpleasant incident and thus furnish the Italian government with an excuse for retaliation in Tripoli.[30]

At this point Sir Edward Grey was convinced of the real intentions of Italy with regard to Tripoli and, in a private letter to the Permanent under-secretary of State for foreign affairs, sir Arthur Nicolson, who was openly pro-Italian, said:

> It will be tiresome if Italy embarks on an aggressive policy and the Turks appeal to us. If the Turks do this, I think we must refer them to Germany and Austria as being allies of Italy …. I promised Imperiali that … we would tell the Turks that any action Italy took to defend her interests had been brought by the Turks upon themselves. We must hope that before Italy does anything the Turks have done something to enable us to give this answer, if the appeal is made to us.[31]

This attitude arose from the fact that Grey did not approve any type of Italian military action in North Africa, but neither wanted to prevent it. The balance of power in Europe was much more important for Great Britain than the Italian conquest of Tripoli and opposing to Italian aims at this time would only have obtained the result that Italy even more resolutely adhered to the Triple Alliance, which was to be prevented in any way possible.

Before taking the final decision to intervene, the Italians took the precaution of contacting the British government once again: on September 20, the Italian ambassador called at the Foreign Office to see Nicolson,

> who asked him whether he had any news in regard to Tripoli. He replied in the negative, and said that he was unaware what line his Government

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[29] T. L. B. O' NEILL, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
[30] B.D.O., vol. IX, d. 228, Sir G. Lowther to Sir E. Grey, Constantinople, September 18. 1911, p. 272.
[31] IBID., d 231, Sir E. Grey to Sir A. Nicolson, Fallodon, September 19. 1911, p. 274.

> would follow. … [Imperiali] asked what was the attitude of His Majesty's Government in regard to the question. Sir A. Nicolson told him that he believed I had explained it to him on a previous occasion. The Italian Ambassador said that was the case, but he wished to know if there had been any change. Sir A. Nicolson told him he was not aware of any.[32]

Following this meeting, Imperiali was able to write to Di San Giuliano on 25 September that Italy would have no trouble with Great Britain and added that he had learned from a "reliable source" (the same Sir Edward Grey, *Editor's Note*) that Nicolson had told to the Turkish ambassador in London, that "In the present instance it was clear that the attitude of His Majesty Government must be the same and that they could not intervene in differences between Turkey and Italy".[33] Meanwhile, Rodd continued to write to the Foreign Office that

> Time-expired men on military roll of 1888 have been recalled to the colours to the number of 90.000 by Royal decree, [... and] battle-ships 'Roma' and 'Napoli' with cruiser 'Amalfi' sailed for Syracuse. Other ships from Adriatic are moving towards Taranto,[34]

And

> Battle-ship "Giuseppe Garibaldi" and three torpedo-boat destroyers arrived at Messina yesterday, destination unknown, and four, in addition, have left Naples steering south.[35]

So, it was evident that the outbreak of a conflict was imminent.

Shortly before the ultimatum on September 28, Nicolson met Imperiali once again and made it clear to him that British official circles expected Italian action in Tripoli and His Majesty's Government had not any intention to oppose.

After the delivery of the ultimatum to Turkey's Grand Vizier on September 28, just a few hours before the declaration of war on September 29, the Italian ambassador in London called on Sir Grey for the last time, presenting a long list of grievances against Turkey, and asking once again what was London's attitude in regard to the Italian enterprise in Tripoli.

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[32] IBID., d. 245, Sir E. Grey to Sir R. Rodd, Foreign Office, September 27. 1911, p. 281.
[33] IBID., d. 251, Sir E. Grey to Sir R. Rodd, Foreign Office, September 29. 1911, p. 285.
[34] IBID., d. 235, Sir R. Rodd to Sir E. Grey, Rome, September 24. 1911, p. 276.
[35] IBID., d. 238, Sir R. Rodd to Sir E. Grey, Posilipo (sic.), September 26. 1911, p. 277.

Grey, at this point, made no secret of the fact that his government was not happy about the prospect of a war between Italy and Turkey, but said nothing that could be interpreted as an opposition to the Italian action. Grey's statement concerning the Italian initiative was summarised by Imperiali in a telegram to Di San Giuliano:

> 1 - England does not intend to intervene in the conflict;
>
> 2 - England, in agreement with Italy, recognises the primary importance of Italian interests in Tripoli and the Italian necessity to protect them;
>
> 3 - Even more than for the said agreement, but for the cordial friendship that binds her to Italy, England wants that Italy obtains due satisfaction;
>
> 4 - Italy, however, with occupation of Tripoli having taken an extreme measure which - no one today can predict - can have heavy consequences for European peace and can create serious embarrassment to all powers, beginning with England, which has many Muslim subjects. [His Majesty's Government] is confident that [King Victor Emmanuel III's] government will find a way to protect their interests possibly avoiding embarrassment and difficulty to other powers.[36]

The personal evaluations of the ambassador at the end of the telegram showed that Grey had intended, with his statement: "to show friendship to Italy, advising moderation ... and put away his responsibilities to the Parliament" [37]. The benevolence of the British government was an important guarantee for Di San Giuliano, starting to launch military operations in Libya, but many troubles occurred at the outbreak of the war: first of all arose the problem of British public opinion, deeply influenced by the press.

The Outbreak of the War

At the outbreak of war, on September 29, Grey turned to Imperiali a strong protest against the Italian aggression, which was described as "very embarrassing for world Powers"[38]. The main cause of this behaviour of the British foreign secretary, despite all the assurances given in the days

[36] Cit. F. MALGERI, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-110.
[37] IBID.
[38] C.J. LOWE, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

before to the Italian ambassador, was the vehemence of the British news media reaction to the war.

The press from Left to Right, and especially the main newspapers, such as the *Times*, the *Morning Post*, the *Westminster Gazette*, but also the more radical, such as the *Daily News*, the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Daily Graphic*, were uniform in their denunciation of the Italian enterprise, emphasising both "its immorality and its likely repercussions in the Muslim world".[39]

As from July to September, the neutrality of Grey had shown a strong asymmetry in favour of Italy, from October onwards, his policy of non-intervention was more resolute. The orientation of the Foreign Office in the early stages of the war was to avoid an expression of sympathy towards Turkey to favour Italy, so that Constantinople did not extend and prolong the fighting but, as the conflict continued to escalate, a conciliatory attitude towards the Italians by the British government appeared increasingly difficult.

With the renewal of the foreign press attacks against Italy after the terrible vengeance that followed the "Sciara Sciat massacre" in Tripoli, at the end of October 1911,[40] the House of Commons assumed an openly pro-Turkish feeling, shared by the population, which was added to the growing irritation of the British government against Italy for having reopened the "Eastern Question". All this was enough to deter any prospect of an Anglo-Italian Mediterranean agreement, called for by many in Britain and Europe, as long as the war lasted.

Even so, most British diplomats, Foreign Office officials and British politicians favoured a pro-Italian orientation to British policy. Among them, one of the most influent voices was that of Winston Churchill, first Lord of the Admiralty, who wrote to Sir Arthur Nicolson on 26 September a letter on this issue:

> Will it not if it comes to war or warlike tension throw Turkey into German arms more than ever - thus making the complete causeway: Germany – Austria – Romania – Turkey.Will it not 2ndly detach Italy from the Triplice, and consequently make her desirous of the support of France and England; Will it not thirdly increase or revive the irritation of Germany at being left out when "the vanquished nation" [i.e. France] secures Morocco,

[39] IBID.

[40] On October 23. 1911 in Sciara Sciat (*Shari' Shatt*), near Tripoli, the Arab-Turkish troops defeated some departments of the 11th Regiment "Bersaglieri". This resulted in the deaths of 378 Italian soldiers and officers. Revenge of the Italians was immediate and terrible: more than 4000 inhabitants of Tripoli (men, women and children) were slain. See: F. CRESTI, M. CRICCO, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.

> and the poor spirited ally [i.e. Italy] the noblest possession of Tripoli. The reactions of this Italian adventure threaten to be deep, and we stand both to gain and lose by it. But clearly we must prefer Italy to Turkey on all grounds - moral and unmoral. Do you think it possible that Germany has been marking time for this to happen in order to secure an atmosphere more suited to thunderbolts? On the whole, the balance seems to turn to our advantage.[41]

Nicolson was openly pro-Italian and he made no mystery of his opinions in a letter sent to Sir Fairfax Cartwright, the British ambassador in Vienna:

> I am exceedingly vexed at the tone of our Press here towards Italy, as I fear that it may arouse such feelings in that country as will take some time to obliterate. It seems to me exceedingly foolish that we should displease a country with whom we have always been on the most friendly terms and whose friendship to us is of very great value, in order to keep well with Turkey, who has been a source of great annoyance to us and whose Government is one of the worst that can well be imagined. I should far prefer having Italy as a neighbour to Egypt than the Turks, and I think our Press has gone quite on the wrong tack in criticizing with such severity the action of Italy though perhaps the actual conditions of her case did not justify her action, but still afford no ground for us to raise the storm which is taking place here against her.[42]

The British ambassador in Rome, Sir Rennell Rodd, was hopeful that the Italian initiative in Libya could turn into advantage for Great Britain and the Entente in the Mediterranean. In a series of letters sent in October and November 1911, he tried to convince Grey to negotiate an agreement to subtract Italy to the influence of the Triple Alliance.

In a letter of October 25, Rodd proposed to the Foreign Office "some form of tripartite agreement between England, France and Italy, for reciprocally guaranteeing their position in the Mediterranean" and added that "Tripoli will undoubtedly prove a serious responsibility to Italy, and will greatly add to her vulnerability, as well as contribute to her importance as a Mediterranean power, and an arrangement which would eliminate any menace to her new acquisition". The letter continued showing the influence, in Rodd's design, of the highly experienced French ambassador in Rome Camille Barrère "who revolves many political

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[41] B.D.O., vol. IX, d. 240, Mr. W. Churchill to Sir A. Nicolson, Balmoral Castle, September 26. 1911, p. 278.

[42] IBID., d 267, Sir. A. Nicolson to Sir F. Cartwright, Foreign Office, October 2. 1911, pp. 298-9.

combinations in his subtle mind and who is always engaged in planning how Italy can be withdrawn from the Triple Alliance". The proposal could be summarised as follows:

> An agreement between the three Powers most interested in the Mediterranean and the north African Coast – though nominally for Mediterranean purposes only – [that] would take all the sting out of the Triple Alliance, as far as Italy is concerned [...] expand[ing] this point of view considerably.[43]

Though, understanding that it might be hard to persuade Di San Giuliano, a convinced fan of the Triple Alliance, Sir Rennell Rodd supposed prime minister Giolitti and king Victor Emmanuel were open to influence.

On November 6, in fact, he wrote a letter to Sir Grey in which he depicted the Italian situation in the Mediterranean after the outbreak of war referring Giolitti's position to the Foreign Office:

> Signor Giolitti ... said that henceforward Italy would have to be very careful not to alienate the goodwill of the two great Maritime powers in the Mediterranean, France and England, on which her position in Tripoli would make her much more dependent. This does not necessarily mean that he is actually contemplating the possibility of a withdrawal from the Triple Alliance, but it would seem to indicate that if Italy should renew, her continuance in the association with Germany and Austria-Hungary will be even more of a mere form than it has been in the past.[44]

But with the Royal Decree of Annexation of the Ottoman provinces of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica dating November 5. 1911, with which Italy acknowledged its rights of suzerainty over Libya, although it controlled only some coastal tracts and sites which were still threatened by Arab-Turkish troops, the government of Rome irritated the neutral powers and specially the British,[45] so Sir Edward Grey proved adamant to further tentative negotiations with Italy. He had agreed with Rodd and Cartwright about the possibility of an arbitration, and he had written to Cartwright at Vienna on October 26 that: "It is important not to say anything that may be used to misrepresent us having suggested bringing pressure to bear at Rome. I particularly wish to avoid taking initiative of bringing pressure to

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[43] IBID., d. 296, Sir R. Rodd to Sir E. Grey, Rome, October 25. 1911, pp. 315-6.
[44] IBID., d. 302, Sir R. Rodd to Sir E. Grey, Rome, November 6. 1911, p. 320.
[45] For more information on Italian diplomatic objectives early in the war, see T. W. CHILDS, *Italo-Turkish Diplomacy and the War Over Libya, 1911-1912*, Brill, Leiden, 1990, pp. 99-105.

bear either at Rome or Constantinople",[46] but the British foreign secretary was convinced that opening negotiations with Italy in such a crucial moment was not possible.[47]

Following the Italian Royal Decree of annexation, it was rumoured in the principal European capitals that the war was to be extended to the Aegean Sea. On November 7, it was reported through the Russian ambassador in Rome, M. Krupenski, that Italy "[had] propose[d] to attack the Dardanelles with a view to destroy Turkish fleet".[48] This possibility, however, was rapidly denied by the Italian ambassador in Russia, Giulio Malegari, who "intimated to the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs that in any future measures to which Italy may resort she will refrain from operations against the Dardanelles or at other points where interests of other Powers are specially involved".[49] As a response to this declaration, the Ottoman Empire delivered an aide-mémoire to the Foreign Office on November 18, in French, stating:

> Les vaisseaux de guerre Italiens sillonnent les eaux Ottomans. La résistance rencontrée a Tripoli, la situation intérieure en Italie, etc. constituent autant de causes déterminants poussant l'ennemi à forcer le sort et tenter une action navale contre les ports et cotes Ottomans. Le devoir impérieux incombe donc au Gouvernement Impérial de parer à cette éventualité. de plus en plus probable, en recourant à tous les moyens de défense.[50]

Grey did not take the threat of either side too seriously, as he felt that it was a ploy to force the powers to intrude in the war and to intervene on their side, but the Russians, who had always been concerned about controlling access to the Straits, took the diplomatic initiative during the period which followed the declaration of annexation by Italy, until April 18. 1912, when the Italian Royal navy bombed the forts at the entrance to the Dardanelles. The Russian proposals and initiatives, nevertheless, were unsuccessful and the period was designated as one of "diplomatic stalemate".

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[46] B.D.O., d. 297, Sir E. Grey to Sir. F. Cartwright, Foreign Office, October 26. 1911, p. 317.
[47] See C. J. LOWE, *op. cit.*, pp. 319-20.
[48] B.D.O., d. 306 , Sir G. Lowther to Sir E. Grey, Pera, November 7. 1911, p. 322.
[49] IBID., d. 307, Mr. O'Beirne to Sir E. Grey, St Petersburgh, November 12. 1911, p. 322.
[50] IBID., d. 310, Communication from British Ambassador of November 18. 1911, p. 324.

If at the end of 1911 Grey s principal anxiety had been to leave Russia a free hand to promote and understanding between St Petersburg and Constantinople for finding a solution to the Straits question, in 1912 his attitude had changed into a strong desire to avoid war in the Aegean Sea at all costs.

As the war spread from Tripoli to the eastern Mediterranean the importance of British interests involved made any alignment with Italy increasingly improbable. The Italian bombing of the city of Beirut in February 1912 and the Turkish closure of the Straits not only hampered British trade, but also increased the eventuality that the war would spread to the Balkans.

As Italy rejected any form of settlement and extended the conflict by attacking the forts at the entrance to the Dardanelles and occupying the Dodecanese archipelago, British favour towards Italy totally disappeared.

On April 30, Grey requested guarantees from Rome that there would be no further attacks:

> If Italian Government can facilitate the relief desired by enabling us to say to Turkish Government that there will be no attack upon the Straits for a reasonable period, while the channel is opened for purpose described in my telegram …, their action will be very much appreciated here.[51]

On August 6. 1912, Sir Grey warned Marquis Di San Giuliano against any decree annexing the Dodecanese, as he referred to ambassador Imperiali during a short meeting in London:

> As Italian Ambassador came to see me today, I took the opportunity of saying that I hope that his Government would not pass any Decree about the Aegean Islands or commit themselves about them: for any great European maritime Power to keep one or more of these Islands, that might form a naval base, would give rise to difficulties ... I added that we were sensitive about the naval situation in the Mediterranean , as he would have observed from the recent expressions of public opinion and discussions here.[52]

Once peace was signed in Ouchy between Italy and Turkey on October 18. 1912, fearing initiatives from Italy in the Mediterranean, Grey hastened to open negotiations with Rome.

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[51] IBID., d. 400, Sir E. Grey to Sir R. Rodd, Foreign Office, April 30. 1912, p. 390.
[52] IBID., d. 439, Sir E. Grey to Sir R. Rodd, Foreign Office, August 6. 1912, p. 420.

Conclusions

From a series of talks at the Foreign Office between the Italian ambassador Imperiali, Sir Edward Grey and Sir Arthur Nicolson, and in Rome, between the British ambassador Rodd and Di San Giuliano, emerged the new attitude of the British foreign minister towards Italy at the end of the Tripoli war. Grey appeared eager to conclude negotiations for an agreement with Italy on the future architecture of North Africa, but Di San Giuliano proved not to be in a hurry.

Each side wanted to convince the other to take the initiative to prepare a draft agreement, but with mutual hesitation. On November 23. 1912 ambassador Rodd took the initiative and proposed to minister Di San Giuliano a British-Italian agreement providing for the neutralisation of Tripoli and Egypt, but this proposal did not find consensus either in Rome or in London.

While the British government wanted to resume the old line to remove Italy from the Triple Alliance, the government of Rome intended playing on two tables at the same time: obtaining a closer understanding with Britain in the Mediterranean that had to be compatible, however, with the fifth renewal of the Triple Alliance, which was signed at Vienna on December 5. 1912.

Moreover, even the war had increasingly distanced Italy from France: the growing concentration of the French fleet in the Mediterranean, along with some shipping accidents, had increased hostility between Rome and Paris, and their relations cooled. With the renewal of the Triple Alliance, which included a protocol on the Austro-German recognition of the Italian possession of Libya, any new agreement on North Africa would be between Italy and England, not between Italy and the Entente: while Germany would accept (even willingly) the first hypothesis, it would not tolerate the latter.

In London, however, the Foreign Office estimated completely useless an Italian-British agreement on North Africa, while "an agreement with France would be "businesslike", amounting to 'recognition that the 3 Powers accept the division of northern Africa among themselves as a necessary and beneficent arrangement which they agree not to disturb".[53]

The situation, already problematic, was complicated by the Italian government's attitude, which aimed to maintain the Dodecanese in addition to seeking to obtain trade concessions from Turkey in the coastal towns of Asia Minor.

[53] Cit. C. LOWE, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

The Italian conduct posed grave problems, both because it caused personal outrage on the part of the British Secretary, which considered the occupation of the Dodecanese by Italy inappropriate, but produced also a series of strategic objections by the British Admiralty that as early as June 1912 announced that:

> Possession by Italy of Naval bases in the Aegean Sea would imperil our position in Egypt, would cause us to lose our control over our Black Sea and Levant trade and its source, and would expose in war our route to the East via the Suez Canal to the operation of Italy and her allies.[54]

So it was in October 1913 that, before a further request by Grey to Italy to evacuate the islands of the Aegean, Di San Giuliano launched his diplomatic offensive at the Foreign Office, proposing a vague new Anglo-Franco-Italian Mediterranean Entente, which would allow Rome to take time on the issue of the Dodecanese, and would in the meantime, to the intention of the Italian foreign minister, push the allies of the Triple to put pressure on the Turkish government to give to Italy the much-coveted concessions in Asia Minor.

Grey mailed the proposal to the sender, asking Di San Giuliano to formulate a definite plan for a Mediterranean agreement. The Italian foreign minister had to be content with a sectorial agreement on participation in the construction of the Smyrna-Aidin railway, signed in March 1914[55].

For Grey, therefore, the real issue in relations with Italy was the evacuation of the Dodecanese and the ambiguous tone of the Italian foreign minister on this problem was the main cause of the British foreign secretary's deep disbelief of his Italian counterpart, which lasted until Di San Giuliano's death, in October 1914.

Only the needs of World War I and the entrance of Italy into the conflict in May 1915 led Sir Grey to accept, albeit grudgingly, the Italian annexation of the Dodecanese, one of the most controversial points of the Treaty of London.

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[54] IBID., p. 321.

[55] For more information about the The Smyrna-Aidin Railway Settlement, see D. MCLEAN, "British Finance and Foreign Policy in Turkey: The Smyrna-Aidin Railway Settlement 1913–14", *The Historical Journal*, 19 (2), June 1976, pp. 521-530.

CHAPTER IX

BETWEEN TWO EMPIRES: TRIPOLI, SPAIN AND THE OTTOMANS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, 1580-1911

WAYNE H. BOWEN[1]

From the late sixteenth to the early twentieth century, Spain and the Ottoman Empire were engaged in the Mediterranean, in competition for control over the North African city of Tripoli, important for its role in piracy and commerce. Both empires saw Tripoli, especially during the early centuries, as a natural base, and hoped to defeat efforts by the other to assert political, military and economic dominance over it. As both Spain and the Ottomans weakened over the course of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in comparison to the major European powers, both came to see collaboration as a more preferable path, and saw their interests converge over the status of Tripoli in the Mediterranean system. Concern about the growing power of other major states, initially France and Britain, but later Italy and the United States, drove Spanish kings and Ottoman sultans to consider ways they might cooperate together to prevent these newer empires from gaining control over Tripoli. The two empires signed agreements and treaties that had an impact on Tripoli, and Spain also negotiated directly with all three Barbary States – Tripoli, Tunis and Algiers – to improve cooperation, and hopefully forestall the conquest of these regions by other European powers. While these accords did not develop into a full alliance between Spain and the Ottomans, or between Spain, the Ottomans, and the Barbary States, they did lead to modest success in trade, reduced piracy against Spanish ships in the Mediterranean, and low-level military cooperation between Spain and Tripoli.

[1] Southeast Missouri State University.

The efforts by Spain and the Ottoman Empire, conducted through diplomacy, military action, and economic arrangements, had at their heart the goal of, if not maintaining the independence of Tripoli, at least preventing its dominance by others than either Madrid or Istanbul. If neither Spain nor the Ottoman Empire was strong enough to occupy Tripoli, it was better that it remain a free state, than become another colony of Britain, France, or Italy, three potential imperial powers that at various times considered annexing some or all of Libya. This paper will attempt to explain the role of Tripoli in the grand strategy of the Kingdom of Spain and the Ottoman Empire, arguing that the city-state played a central role in the Mediterranean visions of both states, as well as serving as an accelerant in encouraging the close collaboration between the Spanish and Ottomans, a surprising level of cooperation that has to this point received little attention in historical accounts.

The Libyan city of Tripoli was a nexus of frustration for both the Ottoman and Spanish Empires. The challenge for these powers was that this Barbary State was too distant from Madrid and Istanbul for direct rule, but near enough to disrupt trade, diplomacy and military operations in the rest of the Mediterranean region. While during the sixteenth century both Spain and the Ottomans launched campaigns to conquer or punish the Tripolitanians, none of these efforts yielded permanent results. Beginning in the seventeenth century, and especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these two empires began to collaborate in surprising ways to manage the problem of Tripoli. This is the story of those cooperative efforts by unlikely allies, united only by the challenge posed to both by one small piratical city-state in North Africa.

Libya was a Roman and Byzantine province from 106 BC and then spent four centuries under various Islamic caliphates (c.650-1050 AD). After an invasion by nomadic forces from Upper Egypt, however, for almost five hundred years Tripoli and the surrounding territories were without a strong central authority, although also avoiding foreign rule. Various local Berber and Arab tribal leaders vied for control, with frequent clashes between the town of Tripoli and rival factions from the inland deserts, or east in Cyrenaica. In the early sixteenth century, however, it was Catholic powers that imposed authority and order in the region, at least temporarily. Spain occupied Tripoli, as well as other North African ports, from 1505 to 1511.[2] This was the period after 1492, after defeating Granada, the last Muslim state in Iberia, when Spanish monarchs saw in

[2] J. B. WOLF, *The Barbary Coast: Algeria under the Turks*, W.W. Norton, New York, 1979, p. 5.

North Africa an obvious space for military expansion, Catholic crusading, and continuing the spirit of conquest that had driven the Reconquista (Reconquest of Iberia) against Muslims in Spain since the eleventh century. Tripoli was in this regard seen as an essential base for operations in the Mediterranean and, perhaps, the long-dreamed of crusade to reclaim Jerusalem. "King of Jerusalem" was, after all, one of the titles asserted by Castilian monarchs and Holy Roman emperors alike.

King Ferdinand of Aragon, in particular, hoped to unite with the rest of Christendom for a crusade to recover Constantinople and Jerusalem. After hearing an exhortation from the Augustinian vicar general Aegidius of Viterbo in 1506, Ferdinand gained promises of support from England, France and Austria, but these commitments collapsed in disputes over rival dynastic claims. Nonetheless, Ferdinand, drawing on his Spanish and Italian territories, did plan to use his North African enclaves as a launching pad against the Islam influence in the Mediterranean. In 1508, the Spanish began a preliminary campaign to occupy territories "whose seizure would facilitate the enterprise" of returning Jerusalem and Constantinople to the Christian hands that had controlled them before the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, respectively.[3]

Complicating the task of North African conquest for Spain were two factors: finances and immediate history. Spain's finances of the early sixteenth century were always precarious. Even with the beginnings of silver mining in Peru and Mexico, which soon would send massive shipments of metallic wealth to Spain, the imperial commitments of Castile and Aragon – in Italy, in the Americas, in central and northwestern Europe – ensured that, despite Ferdinand's intentions, the Mediterranean could never be the sole fiscal focus of military expenditures for the armies and navies of his realm. Another barrier against Spanish success in North Africa was a self-inflicted wound: the presence of tens of thousands of Hispano-Muslims and Sephardic Jews, who had been expelled from Spain, under threat of death, for resisting conversion to Christianity. Bitter and motivated to extract revenge for their personal and families tragedies, these exiles formed a motivated core within the forces of the Barbary States and Ottoman Empire, absolutely opposed to any compromise or surrender of territory or influence to their former Spanish monarch.[4] Despite these obstacles, King Ferdinand, Spanish grandees, other nobles,

[3] J.M. TERRATEIG, *Politica en Italia del rey catolico, 1507-1516, correspondencia inédita con el embajador Vich*, vol I, CSIS, Madrid, 1963, pp. 77-81.

[4] MUHAMMAD IBN ABD AL-RAFI IBN MUHAMMAD AL-ANDALUSI, *Expulsion of the Moriscos*, 1635, from N. MATAR, *Europe Through Arab Eyes*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2009, pp. 194-200.

merchants and clergy of Castile and Aragon, embraced the mission given them by Queen Isabella in her testament, when she exhorted her people to continue the Reconquista against their Muslim foe, reclaiming North Africa and lands beyond, territories lost to Islam over the previous six centuries.[5]

On May 28. 1509, Pope Julius II declared a Crusade against the Turks, and promised that he himself would take part in the campaign. Ferdinand's offensive was initially successful, with the triumphant seizure of Oran in June 1509. However, this single operation nearly bankrupted Spain. While all the major European states promised to send their forces to aid Spain in the Mediterranean, in the end the possibility foundered, primarily as a result of the duplicity of French king Louis XII, which took advantage of Spain's war against the Turks to invade Italy. While the Catholic church supported Ferdinand's campaign, even blessing a special tax to fund Spain's crusade, it was unable to force the rest of Europe to participate.[6]

Sporadic warfare in Tripoli, as well, ruined Ferdinand's plans to reconquer Jerusalem. The Spaniards saw Tripoli as one of the keys to the Mediterranean, and a necessary base in North Africa that could enable additional campaigns to the East. A Spanish expedition against Tripoli in 1510 led by Pedro Navarro devastated the city, reducing it in size by 50% and to 33% of its previous population. While the Spaniards were impressed by the size and wealth of Tripoli, it was at the Eastern reach of Spanish power, and they were unable to consolidate their authority in Libya at the time. After nearly levelling the city, Navarro attempted to remake Tripoli as a European fortress town, linking it administratively to Sicily and, later, Malta. Both were, however, too distant to provide a constant flow of resources, or to reinforce the Spanish garrison in a timely way should the citadel come under attack. The costs of the war against Tripoli had also been higher than expected, both in terms of finances and manpower, indefinitely delaying the planned push to Jerusalem. In addition, the catastrophic destruction of the city temporarily ended Tripoli's flourishing trade, transforming what had been a prosperous port into a town dependent on sporadic assistance.[7]

Ironically, in conquering the city, the Spaniards had effectively ended its usefulness to the Holy Roman Empire, which in any event was already

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[5] M. A. GARCÉS, *Cervantes in Algiers: A Captive's Tale*, Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville, 2005, pp. 18-19.
[6] J.M. TERRATEIG, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 114, 116, 119, 121, 136-138.
[7] J. WRIGHT, *A History of Libya*, Columbia State University Press, New York, 2010, pp. 69-70. M. A. GARCÉS, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

turning its focus away from North Africa. While the papacy under Julius II and his successor, Pope Leo X, encouraged Spain to continue its crusading in North Africa, these exhausting campaigns quickly outstripped Iberian capabilities.[8] Emperor Charles V (Carlos I of Spain) subsequently transferred rights to the city, along with the island of Malta, to the Knights of St. John in 1530, a Crusading Order also known as the Order of St. John of Jerusalem.[9] Having been themselves expelled from the Holy Land in the thirteenth century, and from their base in Rhodes in 1522, the knights promised to hold Tripoli on behalf of the Spanish, until it could be the departure point for expeditions headed East to Jerusalem. Charles V, faced with greater obligations in continental Europe from archenemy France, a Lutheran revolt in the Low Countries, and ongoing small wars in Italy, did not put as much of a priority on offensive operations in the Mediterranean after the conquest of Tunis in 1535 and a failed attack on Algiers in 1541. Spanish forces held on in Oran and other littoral fortresses, but the vision of Isabella, of marching across North Africa to Jerusalem, never came to fruition. Even Spanish alliances with local Arab and Berber leaders, in coalition against the Ottomans, did not provide a stable zone of Spanish influence in the region.[10]

Faced with a more proximate threat, however, the strength of Spain and the Holy Roman Empire focused on the Ottomans, rather than on their Palestinian province. The mid sixteenth century was a time of open warfare between the Ottoman Empire and Catholic powers in the Mediterranean, especially the Habsburg-led Holy Roman Empire and its allies. While neither side was able to win a decisive victory, there were tactical achievements. In 1551, the Ottomans and their allies conquered Tripoli, making it a province of the empire, and depriving the Holy Roman Empire and the Knights of St. John of their forward North African base.[11]

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[8] J.M. TERRATEIG, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 405-409, 577.

[9] M. J. VILAR, "Migraciones y Relaciones Internacionales: La colonia Española de Trípoli de Libia, Paradigma de Colectivo Europeo an el África Mediterránea en el Siglo XIX (1784-1870)", *Cuadernos de Historia de las Relaciones Internacionales*, Vol. 5, CEHRI, Madrid, 2005, pp. 14-16. J. B. WOLF, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

[10] M.A. GARCÉS, *op. cit.*, p. 18. J. M. ABUN-NASR, *A History of the Maghreb in the Islamic Period*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 154-155.

[11] P. M. ASUERO, M. YAYCIOĞLU AND P. TOLEDO, eds. *Cervantes y el Mediterráneo Hispano-Otomano*, Editorial Isis, Istanbul, 2006. M.A. GARCÉS, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
H. İNALCLIK, *El Imperio Otomano y España en el Mediterráneo (1551-1571). Lepanto en los documentos otomanos*, p. 11.

For the rest of the sixteenth century, Tripoli was an asset to the Ottoman Empire, alternatively as ally and client. Libyan pirate vessels acted as raiders against Christian commercial and naval ships or as auxiliaries to the large Ottoman navy. Tripoli's main economic endeavour, piracy, was useful to the Ottomans: "the sultan used the corsairs as a cloak, to be cast aside when burdensome, drawn about him in threatening weather."[12] Initial Ottoman rule was replaced by that of pasha, or governor, who increasingly came to be named from local elites, rather than selected from court or military figures from Istanbul. In 1587, Tripoli became a regency, increasing its potential autonomy.[13] Along with Tunis, which fell to the Ottomans in 1574, and Algiers, which had last been under serious assault by Spain in 1541, Tripoli made up the third major city-state along the Barbary Coast.[14]

By the late seventeenth century, the Spanish and Ottoman Empires were beginning to show signs of weakness in the Mediterranean. While the Ottomans besieged Vienna in 1683, it was the last time they would threaten central Europe in a serious way. Likewise, after 1648, Spain was no longer counted as the world's greatest power, and "it was becoming clear that her threats might often be disregarded." Spanish warships patrolled the eastern Mediterranean as late as the 1650s and 1660s, but no longer in the vast fleets of the sixteenth century.[15] Outside of Ceuta and Melilla in Morocco, only Oran remained as a Spanish enclave in North Africa. Oran did fall temporarily into Ottoman control in 1708, but was reconquered by Spain in 1732, remaining a Spanish territory until 1792.[16]

Indeed, by the time of the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714), Spain was a minor power, equivalent to Portugal or the Netherlands, rather than to France or Britain. The Ottomans, as well, no longer terrified Europe, although the other powers had yet to realise that behind the vastness of its territory, the empire of the Sultan was increasingly hollow.[17] Early in the eighteenth century, the Ottomans began to recognise that they could no longer dictate to European states, but would have to negotiate gains, even those achieved on the battlefield. This was also a

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[12] D. M. VAUGHAN, *Europe and the Turk: A Pattern of Alliances, 1350-1700*, University Press, Liverpool, 1954, p. 174.
[13] J. B. WOLF, *op. cit.*, p. 82.
[14] M. A. GARCÉS, *op. cit.*, p. 221.
[15] D. GOFFMAN, *Britons in the Ottoman Empire, 1642-1660*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1998, p. 197.
[16] ABUN-NASR, *op. cit.*, p. 158.
[17] W. F. LORD, *England and France in the Mediterranean*, Sampson Low, Marston and Co., London, 1901, pp. 7, 9-10.

time that witnessed the longest period of peace between the Ottomans and their European rivals, 1739-1769, during which time the Turks sent increasing numbers of ambassadors, consuls and special envoys to ratify their territorial gains of previous centuries.[18]

Tripoli remained officially a province of the Ottoman Empire, but after 1711, with the establishment of the Karamanli dynasty, acted increasingly independent. This ruling house recognised the Ottoman sultan as sovereign, but did not obey Ottoman law, or otherwise contribute to the empire, other than through nominal tribute.[19] Accepting nominal Ottoman power was a useful fiction for both states. The Sublime Porte enjoyed the illusion of a larger empire, and the Tripolitanians not only were protected from attacks by Ottoman allies, they could defer inconvenient requests from foreign powers – such as demands that they stop piracy - to Istanbul, where diplomacy in the sultan's court was often painfully slow and complicated.

Under the reign of Carlos III, the Spanish monarchy undertook a deliberate policy of closer ties with the Ottoman Empire and the three Barbary States. After long negotiations, the Spanish and Ottomans signed a treaty of friendship and commerce in 1782, which would make possible additional agreements with Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli. Indeed, one chapter of the 1782 accord included a specific promise by the Ottoman Empire that they would forward the ratified treaty to each of the Barbary States, implicit in this action that each would follow through with their own agreement with Spain.[20] Although negotiations began slowly, and faced opposition from Morocco, which preferred a united front against the Catholic powers, or at least wanted to shape the direction of the agreement, in early 1784 Tripoli and Madrid signed an agreement similar to that between Spain and the Ottomans, with additional provisions against piracy in the Mediterranean.[21]

In 1784, Tripoli signed an agreement with Spain, agreeing to free trade (with only 3% tariffs) and to end its piracy against Spanish merchant shipping.[22] While Libyan-based pirates did reduce their attacks on Spain's

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[18] V. H. AKSAN, *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace: Ahmed Resmi Efendi, 1700-1783*, E.J. Brill, Leiden and New York, 1995, pp. xv-xvii.
[19] M. J. VILAR, p. 11.
[20] M. A. PALAU, "La mediación de Marruecos entra España y Trípoli en 1784", *Almenara*, vol. 10, Winter 1976-1977, pp. 49-50.
[21] M. A. PALAU, "La mediación de Marruecos entra España y Trípoli en 1784", *Almenara*, vol. 10, Winter 1976-1977, pp. 52, 55-59.
[22] M. CONROTTE, *España y los países musulmanes durante el ministerio de Floridablanca*, Ediciones Espuela de Plata, Seville, 2006, p. 142.

merchants, they continued to operate against vessels carrying other flags, causing punitive expeditions by the United States (1805), the United Kingdom (1817), and Piedmont-Sardinia (1825) against Tripoli. Spain was in the awkward position not only of escaping piratical attacks, but even being a de facto ally of Tripoli and assisting in improvements to the Tripolitanian fleet. Indeed, as part of its agreement with Tripoli, it established a school for Libyan sailors, staffed by Spanish naval officials and technical personnel from Cartagena. Three main groups of trainers were sent to Tripoli, in 1794, 1808 and 1811, with other three to four year rotations of personnel during remaining periods. While this relationship did not lead to a permanent alliance or Spanish base in Tripoli, and indeed the Spanish Legation finally closed in 1870, it did illustrate the opportunities for cooperation with Muslim powers.[23] From the French Revolution onward, Spain was the primary Catholic state with diplomatic relations and a permanent settlement in Tripoli, not only representing its own interests, but also serving as the protecting power over a small Franciscan mission, chapel and hospital established by the religious order in 1643. Spanish encouragement also led to the Papal states agreeing to diplomatic relations with Tripoli, beginning in 1818.[24]

That Tripoli would be the first of the Barbary States and also precede the Ottoman Empire in signing a treaty of commerce with Spain was no surprise. Recognising its relative weakness, Tripoli had long preferred to engage in diplomacy with the major powers. Its naval forces, sufficient for piracy and smuggling, were no match for a concerted attack by Europeans. While it was almost always willing to ink agreements with the European states, its enforcement of these treaties, particularly those committing it to curtailing piracy, smuggling and slavery, was just as typically lax to the extreme.[25]

After the Hispano-Ottoman Treaty of 1782, the Ottoman Empire hoped for even greater assistance from Spain. During its frequent conflicts with the Russians and Austrians, the Ottomans asked Spain to attempt to close the Mediterranean to trade and unfriendly warships. Unfortunately, Spain was in no position to be a significant ally, nor was its commercial strength serious. Indeed, despite additional commercial agreements with Istanbul,

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[23] M. J. VILAR, pp. 23, 28, 71.

[24] J. B. VILAR, "La mission Franciscana de Trípoli de Berbería en el Siglo XIX, en la correspondencia oficial de los cónsules de España", *Archivum Franciscum Historicum*, Vol. 93, 2000, pp. 470-477.

[25] R. GRIFFITHS, *A Complete History of the Piratical States of Barbary: Algiers, Tunis, Tripoli and Morocco*, Dunciad at St. Paul's Churchyard, London, 1750, p. 316.

most notably an accord in 1842, Spain was never a major trading partner with the Ottoman Empire, nor was it a factor in arms sales, foreign loans, or any other part of the financial picture. At most, one or two Spanish small vessels made port calls in Ottoman ports per year, having very little impact on overall trade or shipping.[26] Even smaller states, such as Belgium, the Netherlands, and Hamburg were more significant among the eighteen nations with whom the Ottomans had commercial treaties by the early 1850s.[27]

In the end, the solution to the challenges posed by Tripoli to the Ottoman Empire and European powers such as Spain was resolved by the Ottomans themselves. After the internal reforms of the Tanzimat, which created a modern army and navy for the Sublime Porte, Istanbul was by the late nineteenth century in a position to reassert direct control over wayward provinces. The Ottoman military invaded Tripoli in 1835, defeating the Tripolitanians in short order, and reestablishing a Turkish governor and Ottoman garrison in the North African city. Buttressed by their Tunisian allies, the Ottoman reinstalled Turkish forces, sending a larger garrison in 1840. Tunis, fearing French expansion from Algiers, which the European power had occupied in 1830, was hoping to improve its own ties to Istanbul.[28] Tunis would continue to ask for a closer relationship with the Ottomans. Fearing French occupation should there be any doubt of Ottoman sovereignty, the Dey of the city continued to pledge loyalty to Istanbul, while the sultan, recognising the Tunisians' economic difficulties, in 1845 freed Tunis from the requirement to pay an annual tribute to the empire.[29]

The re-occupation of the Libyan city-state by Ottoman forces definitively ended piracy against Mediterranean commerce, at least piratical attacks emanating from Tripoli, and ended the autonomy of the last independent Barbary State. With the decline in Mediterranean piracy in the early 1800s, Tripoli's strategic position declined to an even lower economic and political importance, although it did retain some commercial

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[26] E. H. MICHELSEN, *The Ottoman Empire and its Resources with Statistical Tables*, 2nd edition, William Spooner, London, 1854, p. 263.

[27] Ş. PAMUK, *The Ottoman Empire and European Capitalism, 1820-1913*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987. E. H. MICHELSEN, *op. cit.*, p. 286.

[28] R. DELLA VECCHIA, *Impero Ottomano e Reggenza di Tunisi con inventario di documenti su Tunisi (1840-1860) conservati press l'Archivio di Stato di Napoli*, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, Naples, Italy, 1991, 58; *Fascio N. 3094 – Tunisi. Regio Console. Diversi. 1840-1843*, June, 12 1840, rapporto n. 38 da Tunisi, S. de Martino a S. Cristina.

[29] E. H. MICHELSEN, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-101.

significance as the largest port between Tunis and Egypt, as well as a regional hub for the Trans-Saharan and Sudanese caravan trade in slaves, camels and other goods. Even so, its population never exceeded 15,000 (including 1,000 Christians – mostly Maltese, Sicilians, and Greeks – and Sephardic 2,000 Jews) until the late nineteenth century.[30] Tripoli did come under increasing international pressure, as did Ottoman governors, to curtail the slave trade throughout North Africa. Even after the slave trade was abolished in Tunis (1846) and French-controlled Algeria (1848), it continued in Tripoli legally until 1857, and illegally (but widely practised) even after slavery was abolished on the rest of the Ottoman Empire in 1889.[31] Given the ongoing demand for slaves in the Arabian Peninsula and elsewhere, it took concerted efforts and the better part of the nineteenth century to finally put an end to human trafficking through Tripoli, situated as it was at the nexus of Trans-Saharan routes, as well as providing access to the Mediterranean through its port.[32]

Despite Ottoman success in reasserting control over Tripoli and other territories, these gains occurred in the midst of relative Turkish decline in the face of the rising economic, political and military power of Western and Central European states: Britain, France and Germany, especially. France has long viewed the Mediterranean as its natural area of expansion, looking to North Africa, from Morocco to Egypt, as a zone in which to expand its commercial, cultural and imperial interests. Although Napoleon Bonaparte's plans had founded in Egypt, successive French governments, imperial and republican, looked immediately South for expansion. In this context, the French were the first to propose a canal through Suez, later completed primarily by the British Empire.[33]

Not just the Ottomans, but other non-European powers had to accept the increasing dominance of European states, hoping that internal reforms might redress the disproportionate economic influence of the industrial powers. The rapid rise of European industrial might – including railroads, steamships, and the mass production of standardised firearms and other technologies, undermined the reliance within the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere on non-mechanised agriculture, nomadic husbandry, local artisans, and labour-intensive (and technology-poor) cottage industries. Given the efficiencies of scale, higher quality, and cheaper production

[30] M. J. VILAR, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
[31] ABUN-NASR, *op. cit.*, p. 316.
[32] C. FURLONG, *The Gateway to the Sahara: Observations and Experiences in Tripoli*, Charles Scribner's Son, New York, 1909, pp. 3, 174-175.
[33] E. H. MICHELSEN, pp. 15-16.

costs of European exports, they overwhelmed Ottoman craftsmen wherever these new factory-produced goods could be brought to market.

Muslim societies confronted a new international political and commercial system that worked to the advantage of Europeans. They also experienced an unprecedented acceleration in the pace of social change. Muslim rulers, whether or not their lands were colonised, were forced to acknowledge a new political order. Imports of manufactures from industrialised Europe began to undermine traditional craft skills and challenge the economic basis of Muslim life.[34]

While some Muslim modernising rulers, such as Egypt's Mehmet Ali – a nominal Ottoman governor who broke from Istanbul to establish an independent dynasty – did undertake serious economic and political reforms, none succeeded in the same manner as did Japan, the one non-Western state to industrialise and modernise. Indeed, Mehmet Ali was a counter-example of the time, given the context of reviving Ottoman fortunes after the loss of Greece and other territories during the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars.[35]

In the mid nineteenth century, both Spain and the Ottomans experienced a brief political and military Renaissance, with economic growth, internal reforms and stable foreign alliances. In both cases, alignment with France and the United Kingdom, despite the constraints these relationships imposed, provided some breathing room to revive the strength of each nation's foreign policy. While the Ottomans managed to eke out a victory in the Crimean War (1854-1856), thanks to assistance from Britain, France and Piedmont-Sardinia, Spanish victories were clearer, with a defeat of Morocco in 1859-1860, seizing territory from the North African kingdom. Even earlier, the Ottomans reoccupied Tripoli in 1835, reasserted claims over other provinces, and built a modern army, advised by the French, Prussians/Germans, and British. While the Ottomans did lose territories during this period, especially in the Balkans, their hold over their remaining lands increased through improvements in communication, transportation and administration.[36]

In the early nineteenth century, Tripoli was ethnically and religiously mixed, with Turks, Arabs, Jews, Berbers, and Europeans living together. Visitors often remarked on the beauty of the city, with its wide, European-style streets and well constructed homes. While most of the city was Muslim, there was a Jewish population of over 2,000, which boasted three

[34] S. VERNOIT, *Occidentalism. Islamic Art in the 19th Century*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997 p. 10.
[35] E. H. MICHELSEN, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-21, 30-31, 32-33, 48-49.
[36] W. F. LORD, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-69.

synagogues and dominated external trade with Europe. The European presence in Tripoli was almost entirely Catholic, mostly Italians, Maltese, and Spaniards. An active Franciscan mission, as well as a small number of priests sent directly from Rome, provided religious services. While there were religious and ethnic tensions, exacerbated at times by foreign intervention, Tripoli's citizens survived without major sectarian tensions, despite the city-state's well-deserved reputation as a lawless city.[37]

The international meeting of the Berlin Conference, which met in Germany in 1884-1885 to partition Africa between the European powers, confirmed Ottoman control over Tripoli. The province remained in Ottoman hands until just before World War I, when Italy seized the colony from the Turks, after a brief war won by the Italians. The loss of Libya to Italy in 1912 was a bitter event for the Ottomans, especially given the erstwhile alliance of the Italians with Germany and Austria-Hungary. As World War I would demonstrate, however, betrayal of allies came easy for the Italian state.[38] A rising sense of "political impotence" in relation to the Western powers drove increasing efforts within the Ottoman Empire to bring about significant economic, political and military reforms, as well as encouraging an alliance with Germany, as the European power most willing to challenge British and French supremacy.[39] Alignment with Germany provided military training, investment, and other benefits to the Ottomans. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the German alliance option seemed to hold great promise.

This solution was, however, short-lived. Although the Ottomans were stronger than they had been in centuries, their economic growth and military prowess could not keep pace with that of even the weakest of the European powers: Italy. While Italian unification only occurred in the 1850s and 1860s, and Italy was still mostly poor, agricultural and regionally divided, many Italians viewed their nation as a great power, looking hungrily overseas to create a colonial empire for King Victor Emmanuel. Tripoli, just across the Mediterranean, was a proximate and tempting potential area for expansion for Rome. After several years of diplomatic scuffles and naval skirmishes, in 1911 Italy struck, landing its army on the shores of Tripoli. While Ottoman resistance was fiercer than expected, the difficulties of defending distant Tripoli, and greater challenges to Istanbul rising in the Balkans, resulted in an Ottoman

[37] BEY (DOMINGO BADÍA), *Viajes por Marruecos, Trípoli, Grecia, Egipto, Arabia, Palestina, Siria y Turquía* (Madrid: Terra Incognita, 2001), 179-185.
[38] M. SÜKRÜ HANIOĞLU, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2008, pp. 9-11.
[39] S. VERNOIT, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

surrender in 1912.[40] Libya would no longer be an issue for the Turks, or the Spanish for that matter. It would not be until 2011, a century later, that Madrid and Istanbul would again be drawn into Libyan affairs, with the NATO intervention that led to the overthrow of the regime of dictator Moammar Qadhafi.

[40] M. SÜKRÜ HANIOĞLU, *op. cit.*, pp. 168-170.

CHAPTER X

THE QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE OCCUPATION OF THE DODECANESE: THOUGHTS ON THE FOREIGN POLICY OF LIBERAL ITALY

LUCA MICHELETTA[1]

The history of the occupation of the Aegean islands and Italy's acquisition of sovereignty is a subject that has long been studied from the international viewpoint; a study of the Italian administration of the Greek Archipelago has likewise received many contributions over the years.[2] A

[1] Sapienza University, Rome.

[2] Among the studies on the international aspects of this issue, reference must be made first of all to R. SERTOLI SALIS's well-documented work, *Le isole italiane dell'Egeo dall'occupazione alla sovranità*, Vittoriano, Rome, 1939, whose nationalist attitude casts no shadow over his account of the facts; mention must also be made of the work by R. ORLANDI, *Le isole italiane dell'Egeo (1912-1947)*, Levante, Bari, 1984, making use of the documentation found in the archives of the Foreign Ministry, and the more recent work, *L'esercito italiano nel Dodecaneso 1912-1943*, Ufficio Storico Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito, Rome, 2004, by M. G. PASQUALINI, who worked for the most part on material from military archives. The occupation of the Aegean islands has also been dealt with by F. MALGERI in his now classic book on *La guerra libica 1911-1912*, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Rome, 1970; by M. GABRIELE, within a wider study on the naval war against the Ottoman Empire, *La Marina nella guerra italo-turca. Il potere marittimo strumento militare e politico (1911-1912)*, Ufficio Storico Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito, Rome, 1998; and by G. FERRAIOLI in his work *Politica e Diplomazia in Italia tra XIX e XX secolo. Vita di Antonino di San Giuliano (1852-1914)*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2007. Also important are the studies by W. C. ASKEW, *Europe and Italy's acquisition of Libya, 1911-1912*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1942; and T. W. CHILDS, *Italo-Turkish Diplomacy and the War over Libya, 1911-1912*, Brill, Leiden-New York, 1990.

hundred years on from those events, and on the basis of the research mentioned which has now illustrated the fundamental aspects of this episode in Italian foreign and military policy, it is necessary not so much to reconstruct the circumstances in detail as to analyse them in order to make a long-term reflection on the meaning they have had in the history of Italy's foreign policy.

Let us begin by recalling that by the Dodecanese we mean a group of islands of the southern Sporades, thirteen islands to be precise, which the Italians occupied in April-May 1912. In 1910 the island population was 147,000, 90% belonging to the Orthodox religion and speaking Greek, and the other 10% composed of Turkish Muslims and a small Jewish community.[3] At that time it was still a typically archaic Mediterranean society, with powerful landowners, owners of the so-called çiflik, a corresponding mass of peasants, and alongside them a significant section of the population who made their living from the sea, from activities such as fishing, especially sponge fishing, and the trade deriving from such activities. Not unlike other regions of the Ottoman Empire inhabited by Christians, the Orthodox church was the real spiritual and political centre of these small communities; the "natural" heads of the Greek community were therefore bishops appointed by the Patriarch of Constantinople. During the long period under Ottoman administration the church had upheld the religious, linguistic and cultural identity of those peoples, and since the beginning of the nineteenth century it had inspired the independent Greek nationalist movement.

As we all know, the Greek nation had been the first in Europe to break with the old order and proclaim its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1822, and the first to achieve the goal of an independent national state in 1830. Indeed, well before Italy or Germany, the Greeks had found a common spirit and had fought to obtain self-determination. After 1830 the history of Greek foreign policy was characterised by the dream of reuniting all Greeks within one single state, the so-called Megali Idea, a dream that saw moments of excess and dark periods, something we know happened to all European nationalisms.

This idea had inspired the Greek desire for liberation from Ottoman and Muslim domination; in 1896-1897, only about fifteen years before the arrival of the Italians in the Dodecanese, it led to a new Greek-Turkish war that broke out in the dispute over Crete, the large island near the Dodecanese, where a struggle against the sultan had been going on since

[3] N. DOUMANIS, *Una faccia una razza. Le colonie italiane nell'Egeo*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2003, p. 47, divides the population up into 86% Christians, 10% Muslims, 4% Jews.

the end of the eighteenth century. In the end, Crete achieved a form of indipendence from the Ottoman Empire which united it with the Greek state, but it continued to be a problem, constantly brought to the attention of the international community, until its formal annexation to Greece at the end of the Balkan Wars in 1913. Greek "island" nationalism, no less than mainland nationalism, was very much alive and deeply rooted in the Aegean islands: it was no accident that Crete was the birthplace of a statesman such as Eleutherios Venizelos, the Greek politician who more than any other embodied the dream of the Megali Idea, perhaps even with those excesses that ended in destroying it and wiping out the Greek presence in Asia Minor.

Which islands to occupy?

The idea of occupying one or more of the Aegean islands under Ottoman sovereignty had already occurred to the Italian military authorities in October 1911, less than a month after the declaration of war against the Sublime Porte.

It was Alberto Pollio, head of the army general staff, who made the suggestion on October 19 in a letter to his counterpart in the navy, Carlo Rocca Rey; in this letter he recognised the difficulties already encountered in the Libyan war theatre and put forward the idea of occupying a number of islands, Rhodes for example, with the aim of extending the conflict and carrying the military threat closer to the Turkish coasts, the heart of the Ottoman Empire, but above all with the political objective of acquiring a territorial bargaining counter to use in convincing the sultan to negotiate a peace treaty. Pollio explained that "we have nothing ready," but should the navy consider the operation opportune, studies could be made on how to carry it out in order to present a proposal to the government.[4]

Thus already in November the navy began to prepare a plan for landings on the islands off the Turkish coast, both with the purely military aim of rapidly setting up naval bases there to hinder Turkish commerce and transport and to exert military pressure on the port of Izmir, and with the political aim suggested by Pollio of acquiring territory to use as barter during peace negotiations. In November, however, the diplomatic situation between Italy and Turkey changed radically due to the Italian government's proclamation of the annexation of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica on November 5. This proclamation was the work of Giolitti, probably more to satisfy domestic nationalist groups who were clamouring

[4] R. ORLANDI, *op. cit.*, p. 17; M.G. PASQUALINI, *op. cit.,* pp. 16-17.

for it, than to block further embarrassing mediation on the part of the other great powers.[5]

The annexation proclamation put an end to any hope of a negotiated solution, such as a possible Italian protectorate over Libya which would have maintained a semblance of Ottoman sovereignty. It also further strengthened the Constantinople government's determination to resist. Against this background, the idea of occupying some of the Aegean islands, from which to inflict the decisive blow against the Ottoman Empire and force it to accept peace and to cede Libya to Italy, became increasingly attractive. But which islands? Between November 1911 and April 1912 the army and navy frequently exchanged impressions and considerations regarding military operations, including those in the Aegean, without arriving at any decision on this point.[6] For reasons of international policy, as we shall soon see, the possibilities for military action were not without limits, but in the opinion of the naval commanders it was clear that if a decisive blow were to be inflicted against Turkey, i.e., shelling the forts in the Dardanelles or even bombarding Constantinople, it would be essential to occupy a number of islands such as Mytilene, Lemnos, Imbros and Tenedos whose geographical positions near the mouth of the Straits made them fundamental in the strategic preparations for war.[7]

As mentioned above, from the military point of view there did not appear to be any major obstacles in carrying out the occupation, yet it became evident that diplomatic preparations would prove much more difficult. Di San Giuliano made great efforts to obtain consent from all the European governments involved in the Ottoman Empire's fate to the extension of military operations to the Aegean, immediately coming up against a refusal from Italy's ally, Austro-Hungarian. Not that the other great powers were happy about the idea. Given their general interest in weakening the Triple Alliance, Russia and France were initially resigned to the move; even Great Britain, the leading naval power in the Mediterranean, seemed willing to accept it.[8]

Among the allies, clear consent came from Germany while an equally clear "no" came from Austria-Hungary, a "no" that forced the Italian government to set the project aside for the time being. The Austro-

[5] G. FERRAIOLI, *op. cit.*, pp. 438-40.
[6] M.G. PASQUALINI, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
[7] M.G. PASQUALINI, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-21.
[8] R. ORLANDI, *op. cit.*, p. 20 note 20. C. SETON WATSON, *British Perceptions of the Italo-Turkish War, 1911-1912*, AA.VV., *Italia e Inghilterra nell'età dell'imperialismo*, Franco Angeli, Milan, 1990.

Hungarian refusal was in fact legally well grounded and caused the Italian government great difficulty. It was based on Article 7 of the Triple Alliance, and for the Italians this article was the fulcrum of the Alliance itself. On this clause they had based, and until the outbreak of the First World War continued to base their hopes of bringing their plans for the completion of national unity to a peaceful solution through an agreement with Vienna. They hoped that the latter would cede the Italian lands of the empire in the event of Austria-Hungary's future expansion eastwards. Given its importance, particularly for the subject with which we are dealing, it may be well to recall in detail the terms of this article. It established that

> if, in the course of events, the maintenance of the status quo in the -regions of the Balkans or of the Ottoman coasts and islands in the Adriatic and in the Aegean Sea should become impossible, and if, whether in consequence of the action of a third Power or otherwise, Austria-Hungary or Italy should find themselves under the necessity of modifying it by a temporary or permanent occupation on their part, this occupation shall take place only after a previous agreement between the two Powers, based upon the principle of a reciprocal compensation for every advantage, territorial or other, which each of them might obtain beyond the present status quo, and giving satisfaction lo the interests and well founded claims of the two Parties.

This article, conceived a quarter of a century previously to support Italian irredentist claims, now came into play against Italy since it bound any change in the status quo, such as the Italian occupation, albeit temporary, of the Aegean islands, to a prior agreement with Vienna over territorial compensation, or else left Italy facing the possibility of Austria rescinding the clause. Di San Giuliano maintained that the occupation was simply a temporary act of war and, furthermore, that the islands in the southern Aegean Sea were not geographically and administratively part of European Turkey but of Asiatic Turkey.[9] But this interpretation, certainly doubtful according to the letter of Article 7, prevailed over the Austrian interpretation only in April 1912, thanks to the insistent intervention of the German government and emperor Wilhelm II himself, who convinced Vienna to go some way towards meeting the Italy's claims.[10] At last, in mid-April, authorisation arrived from Austria for a temporary occupation of Karpathos, Rhodes and Astypalaia, three islands, one should note, which were geographically well away from the Straits and the Balkans,

[9] F. MALGERI, *op. cit.*, p. 317. G. FERRAIOLI, *op. cit.*, pp. 466-76.
[10] F. MALGERI, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

and which were totally useless from the point of view of military operations against the Ottomans, as the Italian military authorities immediately pointed out[11].

In any case, the solution to the political controversy with Austria-Hungary opened the way to the commencement of the operation: it began on April 26 with the occupation of Astypalaia. Directives regarding the occupation of Rhodes, the largest of the islands, were sent to Lieutenant General Giovanni Ameglio, the head of the expeditionary force of about 8,000 men, on April 22, 1912.[12] On May 2, the convoy set out from Tobruk, on May 4 the troops landed in the bay of Kalithea and on May 5 they entered Rhodes, welcomed by the population "with joy" and "with jubilation" according to military accounts.[13] By May 17 all Turkish resistance on the island had ceased. As well as Astypalaia and Rhodes, the Italians had in the meantime occupied the islands of Karpathos, Khalki, Kos, Kasos, Tilos, Leros, Patmos, Nisyros, Symi, Lypsos and Kalymnos.[14]

The occupation of all these islands immediately led to a strong international outcry. Vienna protested loudly because Italy had overstepped the agreement made, although Berchtold, the new Austrian foreign minister replacing Aerenthal, avoided opening negotiations on territorial compensation which would have been justified under Article 7 of the Triple Alliance; he merely demanded a written undertaking from Rome to the effect that the occupation was to be temporary.[15]

The Dodecanese and the War in Libya

The events described so far, leading to the occupation of the Aegean islands, pose a number of questions and require some reflection both on the Libyan initiative and, more generally, on how Italian foreign policy was conducted.

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[11] R. ORLANDI, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

[12] The instructions advised, among other things, keeping the troops' morale high by making them understand that they were occupying "an island that was the ancient cradle of civilization, that it was made illustrious for all eternity by glorious actions of war, and that we Italians are bound to it in our memories of the glorious House of Savoy". M.G. PASQUALINI, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

[13] M.G.. PASQUALINI, *op. cit.*, pp. 38, 56.

[14] The tiny island of Kastellorizo was added to the other islands mentioned on May 16.

[15] R. ORLANDI, *op. cit.*, p. 32; G. FERRAIOLI, *op. cit.*, pp. 465-83; L. MONZALI, *Italiani di Dalmazia. Dal Risorgimento alla Grande Guerra*, Le Lettere, Florence, pp. 260-61.

First of all, as we have seen, an occupation of the Ottoman islands in the Aegean was first taken into consideration because it had quickly become evident that the war against Turkey, fought only in the difficult Libyan theatre, would drag on endlessly without achieving the desired political outcome. Indeed, the occupation was intended to provide an immediate instrument of political-military pressure so that decisive blows could be directed against the empire to convince it to cease hostilities, open peace negotiations and agree to the transfer of the two Arab provinces, Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.

And here we come to the first question: as we know, plans at the international level for the Libyan enterprise had been in the making for over thirty years: ever since the first renewal of the Triple Alliance in 1887, Italian diplomacy had gradually managed to gain the consent of all the great European powers. So how is it that in thirty years of diplomatic preparations Italy had never been able to come up with a clear strategic plan to implement in the event of war with the Ottoman Empire? How was Libya to be taken? It was true that Di San Giuliano himself hoped to achieve a protectorate through negotiations with Constantinople and thus in some way to avoid war, but it is also true that not only did the possibility of war have to be taken into consideration, but plans and means also had to be prepared in order to win it!

The occupation of the Aegean islands was not, therefore, something already worked out within a wider plan of war; it was mooted after the opening of hostilities simply as an idea to be taken into consideration. It was, in fact, a sudden improvisation: due to international difficulties it was not possible to carry the war into the heart of Turkey or the Balkans, an alternative preferred by the military since they knew it would certainly succeed.[16] This shows that there had been no careful, responsible collaboration between politicians and the military with the aim of organising the operation as effectively as possible, a failing that was not new and was later to emerge on other occasions in the history of Italian foreign policy. Military plans to defeat the Ottoman Empire should have been made with an eye to the international political situation, as well as to the commitments and constraints that foreign policy imposed on Italy, otherwise the risk was, and indeed turned out to be, to embark on an enterprise on the international political stage, the Libyan operation, which was likely to involve a war that no-one knew how to win at the military level.

[16] M. G. PASQUALINI, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-28. See also: D.G. HERMANN, "The Paralysis of Italian Strategy in the Italian Turkish War 1911-12", *The English Historical Review*, 1989, n. 411.

The second question concerns the reason for occupying those particular islands which were to become the Dodecanese. As we recalled above, a possible occupation of the Aegean islands was taken into consideration but it immediately ran into difficulties with Article 7 and the Austrian veto; in the end, after much pressure and insistence, Vienna granted Italy its authorisation, but only to occupy the southernmost Sporades which were totally useless for the strategic objective of the operation, the creation of bases from which to launch decisive attacks against sensitive targets in the Ottoman Empire. On this issue, it is worth noting two memos that Rocca Rey himself wrote on April 16 and 18 in which the navy chief of staff gave his opinion on the then imminent conquest of Rhodes as follows:

> The island is peripheral both as regards the war in Libya, and as regards Izmir or the Dardanelles. We would not therefore be acquiring a strategic position, but simply a remote island that poses no threat to the vital, vulnerable points of Turkish territory. Rhodes has no resources and no anchorage... Leaving aside the difficulties inherent in such an occupation, we should recognise that the advantages are limited and the effects inadequate for our purpose. No material advantage because the island has no military or economic value. Dubious strategic advantage because the mere occupation of Rhodes is unlikely to force Turkey to make peace. No lasting effects on morale, since Turkey knows very well that our occupation can only be temporary, and that at the end of the war that island will unquestionably revert fully to the possession of the Sultan.

The navy chief of staff went so far as to voice his decided opposition to the occupation of Rhodes; Italian finances would have to bear the cost of the expeditionary force and the upkeep of 40,000 inhabitants; furthermore the possession of Rhodes was a disadvantage from the military point of view since the island was 660 miles from Tobruk, the Italian naval base for operations, and would therefore remain firmly within the Turkish sphere of influence.[17]

All in all, such an occupation would enlarge the scope of military operations, not to the detriment of Turkey but to that of Italy; the latter would be obliged to provide supplies for the expeditionary force and for a large Greek population, and to defend far-flung outposts, thus detracting military and economic resources from the war in Libya.[18] It was quite another question, however, to occupy islands such as Lemnos and Mytilene, indicated by Rocca Rey himself as useful objectives for the war

[17] Ample extracts from the two documents are to be found in M. GABRIELE, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-61; and in M. G. PASQUALINI, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
[18] M. G. PASQUALINI, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-43.

given their strategic position:[19] the former, as mentioned above, was opposite the Straits, the latter in front of the large port of Izmir.

If this was the opinion of the person responsible for naval operations, it is now necessary to explain why the Italian government nevertheless took the decision to occupy the islands. There was certainly still the political goal of acquiring a bargaining chip to barter for sovereignty over Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. The value of this chip for Constantinople, however, was a matter of some doubt. The occupation of islands so far from the political and military nerve centres of the empire, an occupation which had caused an outcry from all the great European powers, would hardly help to overcome Constantinople's determination regarding the surrender of Libya.

In order to explain the decision to go ahead with the occupation, we have to remember the overall situation in which the Giolitti government found itself at that time, above all after the botched attempt made by the Italian navy on April 18 and 19 to damage the Ottoman Empire's morale by shelling the Turkish fortifications in the Dardanelles. This somewhat clumsy attack came up against many difficulties and a series of problems which forced the Italian troops to beat a hasty retreat;[20] it terminated amid yet another crescendo of international protest and criticism of the government at home from a public which had long been expecting some decisive action on the part of the navy in the Aegean. Although it had neither strategic, or political important impact for the war, the occupation of islands as famous as Rhodes, for instance, evidently responded to a different aim, the need for domestic support. The same aim which had largely been met by the proclamation of the annexation of Libya at the beginning of November 1911.

The Italian conquest of the Dodecanese had no significant effect on the Libyan War. We know that the Ottoman Empire decided to cease hostilities only when it was effectively threatened by an even greater upheaval in the Balkans, where Montenegro, Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece were on the verge of war against the sultan. However, we may well ask how long the war between Italy and Turkey would have lasted, and what outcome there would have been for Italy had the events in the Balkans not been favourable.

The peace preliminaries at Ouchy and the Lausanne peace treaty of October 1912 finally closed the chapter on the Libyan operation, both regarding Italian-Ottoman relations and internationally. The Italian

[19] R. ORLANDI, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
[20] M. GABRIELE, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-58.

presence in the Dodecanese, however, remained high on the agenda of the great powers; the European governments, allies and friends alike continued to be against it. It should be underlined that the Italian military high command consistently repeated its previous conviction: even with peace negotiations in sight, it was against continuing the occupation of the islands. It believed that, at the very most, Rhodes and Astypalaia should be kept as bargaining counters.[21]

What is to be done with the Dodecanese?

However, the Lausanne treaty prolonged the presence of the Italians, since their withdrawal was conditional on Turkish compliance with the clause specifying their obligation to evacuate all Ottoman troops from Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.[22] After peace was signed, General Ameglio once more expressed the opinion that it would be better for Italy to return all the islands. It had soon become clear that the initial enthusiasm of the Greek population on the islands at the arrival of the Italians was no more than the wish to be rid of the Ottomans and the expectation of prompt unification with mainland Greece as called for by the vast majority of the inhabitants. The population would perhaps have put up with the Italian administration more willingly had a statute of autonomy been conceded, but only as a means to prevent the return of the hated Turks.[23]

In spite of the opposition from the great powers, in spite of the opinion of the military, in spite of the fact that Di San Giuliano himself believed they naturally belonged to Greece, the Italian government showed no intention of leaving the islands. Not content with the substance of the Lausanne peace treaty, the government tried to trade off evacuation for a variety of further requests, all of them different. During the Balkan wars and the negotiations for the "creation" of Albania, it thought of ceding the Dodecanese to Greece if the latter withdrew from the regions it had occupied in Albanian Epirus and agreed to a frontier at Cape Stylos;[24] then it changed its mind about this proposal as well on witnessing the victories and territorial acquisitions of Greece at the end of the conflict;[25] it then attempted to exchange the islands for economic concessions in the Turkish region of Antalya, but met with a curt refusal from the Ottomans.[26]

[21] M. G. PASQUALINI, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
[22] R. ORLANDI, *op. cit.*, p. 34 note 74.
[23] M. G. PASQUALINI, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-75.
[24] G. FERRAIOLI, *op. cit.*, pp. 616-17.
[25] IBID., pp. 624-25.
[26] IBID., pp. 690-93.

However, the Constantinople government had not given up sovereignty over the islands at Lausanne, and therefore paradoxically sided with the Italians, preferring the Dodecanese to remain legally under temporary Italian occupation rather than running the risk of being forced to hand them over to Greece, as had happened with Crete, as a result of pressure from the great powers.[27]

This indecision as to what objectives to pursue for the Aegean islands was also evident at the beginning of the negotiation on the war alliance with the Entente: to please London, one of the most strenuous supporters of Italian evacuation, Di San Giuliano did not demand an outright recognition of Italian sovereignty, but only that it had "inspectors, counsellors and controllers"[28] there. But, by what right, we may well ask? At the end of September 1914, he finally clarified his position in the negotiations with the Entente by proposing that, should Ottoman territorial integrity continue, Italy would hand back the Dodecanese, although leaving there "in some role, a number of Italian officials"; in the case of the break-up of the Ottoman Empire or of a shift in the balance of power in the eastern Mediterranean, Italy would require sovereignty over the islands.[29]

After Di San Giuliano died and Sonnino succeeded him, negotiations on Italy's entry into war were accelerated and clarified: Italy asked for and obtained sovereignty over the Aegean islands, in an explicit clause of the London Pact of April 1915. Then, at the end of the First World War, the Dodecanese became part of the bitter controversy that saw Italy opposed to Greece, and that included other territorial problems such as the dispute for the control of the Smyrna region and other parts of Anatolia, or more general political problems, such as the role that the two countries claimed in the eastern Mediterranean and their attitude towards Kemal Ataturk's nationalist revolution. Relations between Italy and Greece approached boiling point while irredentist tensions in the islands re-emerged. After the initial enthusiasm of the islanders for their liberation from Ottoman domination came the hope of annexation to Greece; this turned into disappointment and discontent with the terms of the London Pact which were made public at the end of the war and put an end to any such possibility.[30] It was in fact on April 20 1919 during the peace conference in Paris that an irredentist demonstration held in Rhodes forced Italian

[27] IBID., pp. 696-97.
[28] IBID., pp. 899-01.
[29] *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani,* Rome, Ministero degli Affari Esteri, serie V, vol. I, d. 803.
[30] R. SERTOLI SALIS, *op. cit.*, pp. 241-44.

soldiers to fire on the crowd, killing a priest and a woman.[31] Although we are well aware that the incidents during Italy's peace negotiations cannot be judged solely from this viewpoint, it is interesting to note that the events in Rhodes occurred precisely during the days when the Italian government had left the peace conference in protest against the allies' attitude to the question of its eastern frontier, in particular the town of Fiume, and the Italian nation was going through a moment of passionate fervour calling for the right to national self-determination.

The new political order emerging with the division of the territories of the former Ottoman Empire saw the Dodecanese issue come to the fore once more as one of the major points of friction between Italy on the one hand and Greece and Great Britain on the other. In fact, true to its traditional strategic doctrine that would not accept the presence of other naval forces to the east of Malta to guarantee the security of the eastern Mediterranean sea routes, the British Navy continued to consider the Italian presence undesirable, preferring that of small, friendly Greece. The fear was that in Italian hands a number of islands, Astypalaia for instance, might in the future become air or submarine bases.[32]

The international post-war history of the Dodecanese was therefore played out among three contestants: Greece which continued to claim them as part of its own national territory, Great Britain which for its own strategic reasons continued to support Greek hopes, and Italy which continued as before to consider them as something to barter in exchange for objectives that continued to vary.

In July 1919 Rome agreed to hand the islands over to Greece – all except Rhodes, which it was willing to surrender in the event that Great Britain was willing to cede Cyprus to Greece, a clearly impossible condition. This commitment, considered essential by the foreign minister Tittoni since the Peace Conference would never under any circumstances assign sovereignty over the islands to Italy,[33] came within the framework of a more general agreement with the Greek prime minister Venizelos,

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[31] M. G. PASQUALINI, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-12. N. DOUMANIS, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-63; on the inhabitants' expectations of union with Greece, see the White Paper presented to the Peace Conference: *The Dodecanese. Resolutions and Documents concerning the Dodecanese, 1912-1919*. See also the Greek diplomatic documents on the issue: *The Dodecanese. The Long Road to Union With Greece*, Kastaniotis Editions, Athens, 1997.

[32] See L. MICHELETTA, *Italia e Gran Bretagna nel primo dopoguerra. Le relazioni diplomatiche tra Roma e Londra dal 1919 al 1922*, Rome, Jouvence, 1999, p. 683, note 49.

[33] L. MICHELETTA, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

who wanted a comprehensive solution to the wider dispute between the two countries, a dispute ranging from the issue of Albania and its frontiers to their respective spheres of influence in Asia Minor.

This agreement was reached since the Italians hoped this would enable them to attain Great Britain's backing for the other Italian claims at the peace conference, above all those concerning its eastern frontier. Once this illusion had evaporated, the Giolitti government with Sforza as foreign minister denounced the Tittoni-Venizelos agreement and withdrew from all its commitments apart from the surrender of the Dodecanese, with the exception of Rhodes which was still tied to the fate of Cyprus. This cession had to be reconfirmed in a further exchange of notes signed by Bonin, the ambassador to Paris, and Venizelos on August 10 1921.[34]

In spite of this, the hand-over to Greece did not take place; from 1921 to 1923 the Dodecanese question continued to be among the most contentious points with Great Britain[35], which eventually made the transfer of the islands to Greece a condition for the cession to Italy of Jubaland, provided for under another clause of the London Pact. The 1923 Lausanne treaty finally brought the conflict with Turkey to an end and conceded sovereignty over the Aegean islands to Italy. This was, however, a somewhat meagre result compared to the Italian dreams of expansion into the eastern Mediterranean cherished before and during the war. It was, above all, an on-going festering sore in Italian-Greek relations, as well as a source of suspicion for the new Turkey, which would miss no future chance of airing its fears regarding Italian military activity on the islands. On this point we must remember that it was from the Dodecanese islands that the 1919 Italian naval expedition set out to occupy Antalya and a number of other ports on the southern coast of Turkey in the hope of being granted a sphere of influence in that region by the peace conference; another expedition that proved costly and useless and which ended after three years amid reciprocal recriminations among Italy's military personnel, diplomats and politicians.

Comments

The events leading to the acquisition of sovereignty over the Aegean islands as so far described here suggest a number of concluding points that need to be made. Firstly, the last "colony" conquered by liberal Italy was in fact the Dodecanese islands and not Libya, although in legal terms the

[34] IBID., pp. 201-06.
[35] IBID., pp. 521, 576-77, 661-62, 715-18.

Aegean islands were never "colonies". As we know, in 1924 the Dodecanese became a "Possession" under the direct control of the Foreign Ministry and not a "colony" under the management of the Colonial Ministry. Furthermore, it is true to say that sovereignty over the Dodecanese and Italy's continued presence on those islands was achieved almost accidentally, as a result of events beyond Italy's control, a sort of second-best expedient unsupported by any adequate, mature assessment of Italy's real interests. Much the same had happened with other foreign policy initiatives, starting from the Massawa landing planned in 1884-85 with aims and intentions quite different from that of initiating the colonisation of the Horn of Africa, and finishing with Libya itself.[36] In this case, the policy of maintaining the balance of power in the Mediterranean, justifiably adopted by Italian diplomacy thirty years before, had turned in 1911 into a sort of mirage of *grandeur* and power in the eyes of the Italian public and press, a panacea for all Italy's unsolved ills.

And here a further point and distinction must be made between the annexation of Libya and that of the Dodecanese: in the Libyan initiative Italy detached a tract of territory from the multinational Ottoman Empire. The idea – shared for a short time by Di San Giuliano himself before and during the initial stages of the war – was to support a number of local potentates or even the Senussi brotherhood itself in order to set up a protectorate, thus encouraging the Libyan Arab movement for emancipation from Turkish-Ottoman domination. We now know that things did not go as planned, indeed quite the opposite, but the intention behind the operation was to win support from nascent Arab nationalism, slumbering for the moment but certainly present. The British showed it could be done when in 1915 in a military anti-Ottoman move they succeeded in gaining the collaboration of the Arabs by promising their detachment from the empire and a life independent of the Turks.

In occupying the Dodecanese, however, Italy extended sovereignty over territories inhabited by Greeks from time immemorial, lands for a century the object of Greek irredentism; and Greece was a European national state which, like Italy itself, was in the throes of defining its political-territorial boundaries by means of war and diplomacy, on the basis of the principle of nationality. The people of the Aegean islands had been and were still closely bound to their mother-country, Greece;[37] they

[36] L. MICHELETTA, "Perché la Libia? Questione libica ed equilibrio nel Mediterraneo nella politica estera italiana dall'unità alla Grande Guerra", *I Quaderni della Rivista Aeronautica*, Edizioni Rivista Aeronautica, Rome, 2012, n. 9, pp. 7-27.
[37] N. DOUMANIS, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-51.

had shared the experiences of the Greek nation ever since the struggle for independence in 1822, identifying with its myths and its ambitions, including the dream of the Megali Idea: the return of a great Hellenic state in the eastern Mediterranean through the unification of all the lands inhabited by Greeks.

In the case of the Dodecanese, therefore, a piece of Greece was occupied and effectively turned into a "colony": a piece of Europe, the continent where for centuries nations had been working to forge their identity and their right to a national existence independent of the great multinational state aggregates. We will perhaps better understand the significance of the Dodecanese question within Italian foreign policy if we set it beside two other questions, identical in many ways, which confronted Italy after the First World War: Alto Adige/South Tyrol and its eastern border. In these cases, Italy extended its sovereignty either over lands which were non-Italian from the nationality principle point of view, as in the case of South Tyrol, or where such a principle was to say the least debatable, as in the case of its eastern border. Its strategic reasons for so doing were entirely understandable: the border was to be advanced as far as the Alps, the Brenner Pass and Montenevoso, in accordance with the concepts concerning the state's territorial and military security which were current at that time. This did not prevent Italy, however, from being involved in a harsh controversy with Germany and Austria on the one hand, and Croatia and Slovenia on the other, a controversy whose political aftermath continues to this day.

With regard to the Dodecanese, however, the sovereignty acquired meant a continuing dispute with the Greek nation for no overriding reasons of strategy or security for the Italian state, and without gaining a vital military outpost for Italian naval operations in the Mediterranean, as became evident during the Second World War. It is not surprising that the Italian administration in the "Possession" was merely tolerated, never accepted either by the island population or by Greece. Active Greek irredentism in the islands continued and the calm situation depended to a large extent on the administrators' intelligence and sensitivity towards the national question. Mario Lago, a refined, distinguished diplomat, the first Governor of the Dodecanese from 1924, was appreciated for his ability and moderation. However, even his long governorship was punctuated by symptomatic anti-Italian protests,[38] such as the "war of the stones" on Kalymnos in April 1935; groups of women, convinced that Italy intended to impose conversion to Catholicism on the population, hurled stones at

[38] IBID., pp. 88-92.

the Italians.[39] His successor in 1936, Cesare Maria De Vecchi di Val Cismon, an authentic product of militant fascism, was not so clever and began the process of forcing Italianisation on the population,[40] thus exacerbating relations with Greece, the final outcome of which came with the Italian attack in October 1940.[41]

The Dodecanese question, therefore, well illustrates the trend of foreign policy in liberal Italy, the expression of a society and political system already in difficulty. As a foreign policy it was too inclined to seek international prestige and the rank of a great power, with no clear, practical objectives beyond that of national unification; as a result it followed, perhaps too meekly, in the wake of the great European powers. This was how Italy lost that kind of moral supremacy that had been so dear to a certain tradition of the Risorgimento that had wanted the newly created national state of Italy to be at the forefront of Europe in the defence of and respect for the principle of nationality, at the forefront too in the invention and application of that principle of the self-determination of peoples that Pasquale Stanislao Mancini had studied and placed at the service of the House of Savoy.

In conclusion, I believe that the occupation of the Dodecanese should have been felt as an embarrassment for that Italy which still claimed, in the public spaces of its cities and in the textbooks of its primary schools, to be the heir to the thoughts of Ugo Foscolo, the great Italian poet and patriot born on the Greek island of Zakynthos, and to the liberal patriot Santorre di Santarosa, Carlo Alberto's war minister in 1821, who died in 1825 on the Greek island of Sphacteria, in the bay of Navarino, a volunteer fighting for the independence of the Greek nation.

[39] IBID., pp. 93-98.
[40] IBID., pp. 111-117.
[41] In this regard, see L. MICHELETTA, "La questione della Ciamuria e l'attacco italiano alla Grecia del 28 ottobre 1940", *Clio*, 2004, n. 3.

CHAPTER XI

THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND THE EASTERN QUESTION

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While examining the international context in which the Libyan War originated and developed, the prevailing tendency is to privilege the relations of Italy with the other great European powers. In this way, attention has focused on the intricate diplomatic web through which Italy obtained the recognition of a prevailing interest in the *vilayets* of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, on the rivalries existing among the great powers in the colonial field, and on their impact on the overall relations of strength in Europe.[2] Instead, Italian relations with the Ottoman Empire and their interaction with the so-called Eastern Question are singularly absent from this perspective. And yet, the prolonged crisis of the "Sick Man of Europe" and its potential repercussions represented for decades a subject of great importance for the Italian ruling class, and even for Italian public opinion. Through their reflections, politicians, diplomats, journalists and intellectuals developed an original vision of the problems of delicate regions such as the Balkans, the eastern Mediterranean or northern Africa

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[2] On the Libyan War, W. C. ASKEW, *Europe and Italy's Acquisition of Lybia 1911-1912*, Duke University Press, Durham 1942; G. VOLPE, *L'impresa di Tripoli 1911-12*, Edizioni Leonardo, Rome, 1946; F. MALGERI, *La guerra libica (1911-1912)*, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, Rome, 1979; T. W. CHILDS, *Italo-Turkish Diplomacy and the War over Libya 1911-1912*, Brill, Leiden-New York, 1990; S. ROMANO, *La quarta sponda. La guerra di Libia*, Bompiani, Milan, 1977; A. DEL BOCA, *Gli italiani in Libia. Tripoli bel suol d'amore*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1986, pp. 3-202; S. TRINCHESE, *Mare nostrum. Percezione ottomana e mito mediterraneo in Italia all'alba del '900*, Guerini, Milan, 2006; G. FERRAIOLI, *Politica e diplomazia in Italia tra XIX e XX secolo. Vita di Antonino di San Giuliano (1852-1914)*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2007, pp. 377-502.

– a vision that certainly reflected expansionist or even imperialist aspirations, but that was not shaped exclusively by them.[3]

Italian-Ottoman Relations in a Long Term Perspective

To understand Italy's stance toward the Ottoman Empire, it is interesting to return to events prior to the Libyan War, up to the time of the Risorgimento. Only in this way can one understand the opposition existing at many levels between the young Italian state, born from a process of unification legitimised on the ground of the principle of nationality, and the centuries-old Ottoman power, whose model of multi-ethnic and multi-religious coexistence was clearly at odds with the challenges raised by the process of modernisation. This juxtaposition might appear abstract, but its manifestations were exceptionally concrete. Not surprisingly, the main ideologues of the Risorgimento movement were all in agreement in expressing views resolutely hostile to the Ottoman Empire. This was certainly the case of the radical and revolutionary element represented by Giuseppe Mazzini, for whom Turkey was, in the same way as Austria, an anachronistic "prison of nationalities", destined to be swept away by the course of history and to be substituted by a new Europe shaped by the principle of nationality. It was precisely in the Balkan domains of the sultan, among Greeks, Serbs, Montenegrins, Romanians, as well as among the nationalities oppressed by Vienna, that the Italian movement would seek allies to subvert the old European order. Even once the goal of unification had been achieved, it was still here that the new Italy would promote the creation of a Danubian-Balkan federation or confederation

[3] In the absence of an overall analysis of Italian policy toward the Ottoman Empire, see the references in the various works by A. TAMBORRA, starting from *L'Europa centro-orientale nei secoli XIX-XX (1800-1920)*, F. Vallardi, Milan, 1970. For diplomatic developments, R. PETRIGNANI, *Neutralità e alleanza. Le scelte di politica estera dell'Italia dopo l'Unità*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1987; R. J.B. BOSWORTH, *Italy, the Least of the Great Powers. Italian Foreign Policy before the First World War*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1979; D. GRANGE, *L'Italie et la Mediterranée (1896-1911)*, École Française de Rome, Rome, 1994, 2 vols.; H. AFFLERBACH, *Die Dreibund. Europäische Grossmacht- und Allianzpolitik vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, Böhlau, 2002; P. PASTORELLI, "Il principio di nazionalità nella politica estera italiana", G. SPADOLINI (ed.) *Nazione e nazionalità in Italia*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1994; among the most recent and stimulating works, L. MONZALI, *Italiani di Dalmazia*, Le Lettere, Florence, 2004; FERRAIOLI, *Politica e diplomazia in Italia*. For the attitude of Italian public opinion toward a specific aspect of the Eastern question, M. DOGO, *La dinamite e la mezzaluna. La questione macedone nella pubblicistica italiana 1903-1908*, Del Bianco, Udine, 1983.

and gain a sphere of political and economic influence. This concept was symptomatically expressed by Mazzini in a series of essays published under the name of *Slavic Letters*

> The Turkish Empire in Europe is a foreign military camp, isolated in alien lands, without a community of faith, traditions, tendencies or activities, without its own agriculture, without administrative skills …: immobilized by Muslim fanaticism, the conquering race, encircled, drowned by Christian populations awakened by the breath of western Freedom, has not produced in more than a century an idea, a chant, an industrial discovery, and counts less than two million men surrounded by thirteen or fourteen of European races, Slavs, Hellenics, Daco-Romanians, that are thirsty for life and aim at insurrection.[4]

In this perspective the Genoese patriot predicted without hesitation that, even after the unavoidable expulsion of the Ottoman power from the Straits of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, the Europeans, and the Italians themselves would have to deploy a civilising mission in its remaining domains in Asia and Africa.[5]

Not only Mazzini and his followers, but also the supporters of more moderate concepts, more respectful toward the established order, displayed such a strong aversion toward the Ottoman Empire. Both Cesare Balbo in *Le speranze d'Italia* (1844) and Vincenzo Gioberti in *Del primato morale e civile degli italiani* (1843) believed that national unification was to be achieved not in opposition to Austria, but through an agreement that would allow her expansion in south-east Europe. Such an inorientamento, or shift eastward, would be achieved precisely at the expense of the European domains of the Ottoman Empire, thereby providing Vienna with adequate compensations for her losses in the Italian peninsula. This concept found the best expression in *La nazionalità italiana* by Giacomo Durando, an author especially meaningful for our purposes, considering that, after having served between 1855 and 1856 as war minister under the Count of Cavour, he was appointed Piedmontese representative in Istanbul. Indeed, Durando did not limit himself to vigorously reasserting the theory of Austria's *inorientamento*, with statements such as "Turkey exists in order to save us with her fall",[6] or "our enterprise … would raise and would naturally provide élan to the Eastern Question, which awaits resolution for nothing else but an

[4] G. MAZZINI, *Lettere slave*, Laterza, Bari, 1939, p. 128.
[5] IBID.
[6] G. DURANDO, *Della nazionalità italiana. Saggio politico-militare*, S. Bonamici e compagni, Losanna, 1846, p. 253.

unavoidable opportunity, coherent with European designs".[7] Apart from this, he provided a gloomy description of the Ottoman Empire, that had substantial analogies with that of Mazzini:

> An extremely vast country, delimited by incoherent and neverending borders; split apart by the sea, in a way to create two geo-strategical systems in mutual opposition and conflict; a people devoid of its primitive energy because of religious fanaticism, and lacking the virtues of civilisation, without the means to obtain the latter or to regain possession of the former; bordering, or better, surrounded by the most expansionist and ambitious European Power [Russia]; increasingly exposed to the civilising pressure of two hundred million and more Europeans; this is today the Turkish Empire, this is the State which awaits only the opportunity and the agreement of the Powers of the world – difficult, but not impossible – to be pushed back to Asia.[8]

For Durando, not even the Tanzimat reforms could justify great expectations, since they had made the Turks "a people neither barbarian nor really civilized", a hybrid unable to regenerate itself and destined to remain in perpetual crisis faced with the emergence of other nationalities' aspirations.[9]

This impressive diversity not only in the realm of politics, but also at an ideological level is confirmed by the recent publication of a selection of Ottoman diplomatic documents on the Italian unification.[10] The correspondence between the Sublime Porte and the Ottoman representatives clearly reflects the uneasiness and the diffidence generated in Istanbul by the Risorgimento, with its revolutionary and subversive aspects, the worries raised by the changes in the Italian peninsula and by their possible repercussions in the Balkans and in the eastern Mediterranean, the irritation for the emergence of a conception of the international order

[7] IBID., p. 284.
[8] IBID., pp. 285-6.
[9] IBID., pp. 287-8. Unlike Mazzini, however, Durando did not exclude that the Ottoman Empire might come to new life after it had been reduced to its natural borders beyond the Straits: "On the contrary, were Ottoman forces to be concentrated in Asia Minor, Turkey would become free again; blood would reanimate the dead body; a reborn nationality would organize itself in the country that borders the best way leading to India...", IBID., p. 300.
[10] *L'Empire Ottoman et l'Europe*, II, *Documents diplomatiques ottomans sur l'unification italienne*, edited by Sınan Kuneralp, Les Editions Isis, Istanbul 2009, 2 vols. [from now on DDO SUR L'UNIFICATION ITALIENNE].

articulated on the principle of nationality.[11] Some elements are especially revealing. For instance, in a confidential dispatch from the beginning of 1859, the representative of the Porte to Turin, the Levantine of Italian origins Rustem Bey, noticed with frustration that the Kingdom of Sardinia acted as the champion of the independentist cause and as "protector of Italy's oppressed nationalities". In this way, Piedmont gained support not only from "a bunch of bad subjects, demagogues, followers of Mazzini", but also from talented men, writers and intellectuals, all united by their aversion to the Ottoman Empire. After having named Balbo and Gioberti, Rustem Bey spoke at length about Durando, by then appointed Piedmontese representative to Istanbul, who, "after having spread injury and calumny on Turkey and the Turks, claims that the expulsion of the Turks from Europe is the only way to regenerate them".[12]

Without doubt, Cavour, whose pragmatism seemed immune to the revolutionary temptations of many Risorgimento intellectuals, attracted wider sympathy. At the same time, even the Piedmontese statesman's habit to employ alternately the card of support for the oppressed nationalities in the Balkans and that of Austrian *inorientamento* in order to promote the cause of Italian unification raised legitimate doubts.[13] Probably even more concerns were caused by Cavour's liberal beliefs and by his support for the separation between church and state, which made him consider with evident scepticism the theocratic remnants in the Ottoman Empire and the double political and religious role of the sultan/caliph. For instance, in a speech pronounced in the Turin parliament in the aftermath of Italian unification, the Italian premier paid homage to the reformist dispositions of the Tanzimat leadership, but did not stop from attributing "the failure of their efforts for the regeneration of the Empire to the continued union of spiritual and temporal power".[14] Such a statement was obviously destined to spread discomfort among the representatives of the Porte, who reacted with embarrassed explanations or requests for rectification.[15]

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[11] As written in the Preface to the DDO SUR L'UNIFICATION ITALIENNE, I, pp. 7-11: p. 7, "For Ottoman diplomacy in the second half of the [nineteenth] century, each border change, each attack against the sacred political statu quo were but a premonition of a danger concerning the integrity of the empire".

[12] DDO SUR L'UNIFICATION ITALIENNE, I, d. 16, Rustem Bey to Fuad Paşa, January 20. 1859; fort the reply, d. 25, Fuad Paşa to Rustem Bey, February 16. 1859.

[13] IBID.

[14] IBID., d. 403, Rustem Bey to Aali Paşa, March 28. 1861.

[15] IBID. See also d. 406, Aali Paşa to Rustem Bey, April 25.1861.

Not even with the declaration of Italian unity in March 1861 did the alarm of the Sublime Porte diminish. On the contrary, throughout the entire decade of the 1860s, Ottoman diplomacy nervously followed the efforts of the young Italian kingdom to complete the process of unification by the conquest of Rome and Venice. In this period, the correspondence to and from Istanbul was marked by calls for Mazzini's arrest, "not only a gesture of good politics, but a great service to peace in the world";[16] by references to the "infernal deeds" of the "adventurer" Garibaldi, supporter of expeditions on the eastern shores of the Adriatic or the Ionian Seas in order to encourage the Balkan populations to rebellion;[17] by charges of "cynicism" and of "the most scandalous brigandage" to the address of the governments that seemed to promote such expeditions (this specifically in the case of the government headed by Urbano Rattazzi between 1861 and 1862, even more dangerously with the presence of the hated Durando at the foreign ministry).[18] Further alarm was caused by rumours concerning negotiations aimed at promoting the cause of Italian unification in exchange for Balkan concessions to the Hapsburg Empire.[19]

For at least a partial change, one had to wait for the attainment by Italy of the double goal of Venice and Rome. Despite the enduring problem of the unredeemed lands of Trento and Trieste, Italy could finally adopt a more tranquil attitude, aligning herself with the other members of the European concert in the prevalent defence of the status quo and in the attempt to avoid the outbreak of the Eastern Question. Doubtless, the Italian ruling class and public opinion remained under the influence of the sympathies for the principle of nationality and for the emancipation of the Balkan populations. Nonetheless, they started to appreciate the advantages offered by the presence of a relatively weak entity such as Turkey in a strategic area including south-east Europe, the eastern Mediterranean and northern Africa. In this evolution, a crucial moment was represented by the great Balkan Crisis of 1875-1878. As shown by the chain of events put in motion by the Berlin Congress (the transfer of the administration over Bosnia and Herzegovina to Austria-Hungary, the establishment of British control over Cyprus and in Egypt, the creation of the French protectorate in Tunisia), the erosion of the Ottoman presence seemed destined to favour more consolidated great powers rather than a relative newcomer such as

[16] IBID., d. 530, Rustem Bey to Aali Paşa, March 24. 1864.
[17] IBID., d. 462, Aali Paşa to Rustem Bey, June 5. 1862; moreover d. 653, Fuad Paşa to Rustem Bey, February 27. 1867.
[18] IBID., d. 492, Rustem Bey to Aali Paşa, December 18. 1862.
[19] IBID., d. 412, Aali Paşa to Rustem Bey, June 19. 1861; d. 559, Rustem Bey to Aali Paşa, November 17. 1864; d. 602, Musurus Bey to Aali Paşa, May 31. 1866.

Italy. On the contrary, the development of friendly, or at least correct, ties with Istanbul could help in promoting Italian economic and political penetration in regions of fundamental interest, such as the eastern shore of the Adriatic or, as we shall see, the north African provinces of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.[20]

Nonetheless, this evolution failed to completely dissipate the scepticism toward the Ottoman world, toward its capacity to resist the challenges of modernity and to regenerate itself through a path of reforms. The situation was fundamentally different in the case of Austria-Hungary, a power that some considered a fundamental partner, with which one day an agreement could be reached on the unredeemed lands, and that for others remained a dangerous competitor, but yet a reality of great importance lying in the heart of Europe. On the contrary, the perception of the Ottoman Empire remained overall pessimistic. To have an idea, it suffices to go through the wide array of popular writings on the Eastern Question provided by authors such as Ruggero Bonghi,[21] Attilio Brunialti,[22] Vico Mantegazza,[23] Giovanni Amadori-Virgilj[24] or others. With a variety of tones and nuances, all of them shared a feeling of resignation and contempt for the increasing weakness of the empire and for the perspective of its break-up, that in a long-term perspective was considered unavoidable. Similar concepts inspired the long series of agreements, exchange of letters and verbal understandings that were negotiated by the Italian diplomacy between the Berlin Congress and the outbreak of World War I in regard to the Balkan domains of the sultan and, above all, to Albania. The premise was constantly the preservation of the status quo, perhaps the most welcome perspective. However, other scenarios were regularly contemplated, envisaging the autonomy or the independence of the Balkan nationalities, if not the possibility of an

[20] See at this proposal the works quoted in footnote n. 2.
[21] R. BONGHI, *La crisi d'Oriente e il congresso di Berlino*, Fratelli Treves, Milan, 1885 (original edition 1878).
[22] A. BRUNIALTI, *Gli eredi della Turchia. Studi di geografia politica ed economica sulla Questione d'Oriente*, Fratelli Treves, Milan, 1880.
[23] Among the wide production of the journalist and publicist V. MANTEGAZZA, see *Al Montenegro. Note e impressioni*, Le Monnier, Florence, 1896; ID., *La Bulgaria contemporanea. Il risveglio di una nazionalità*, Società di guide ed annuari, Milan, 1906; ID., *La guerra balcanica*, Bontempelli & Invernizzi, Rome, 1912; ID., *La Grande Bulgaria*, Bontempelli e Invernizzi, Rome, 1913.
[24] G. AMADORI-VIRGILJ, *La questione rumeliota (Macedonia – Vecchia Serbia – Albania - Epiro) e la politica italiana*, Nicola Garofano, Bitonto, 1908.

agreement with Vienna articulated on an exchange between the unredeemed lands and some areas in the south-east of Europe.

For a moment, new perspectives were disclosed by the revolt, or revolution, of the Young Turks in July 1908. A few Italian observers considered with optimism the possibility of a liberalisation of the Ottoman political system, of the restoration of the constitutional regime that had been introduced in 1876 but soon afterwards suspended by Sultan Abdülhamid II, of a solution of the conflicts among the nationalities subject to the Porte through autonomist or federalist concessions. In that atmosphere, the ambassador to Constantinople, Guglielmo Imperiali, displayed his enthusiasm, writing that it was "impossible to abstain from experiencing feelings of sympathy for this people who seem born to new life";[25] Italian businessmen conceived the hope of being able to exploit the temporary eclipse of traditionally influential powers such as England or Germany, and to promote new economic projects to their direct advantage;[26] even Italian free-masonry took a favourable stance, thanks to the connections with its Turkish equivalents.[27] However, this optimism was ephemeral. Only a few months afterwards, mistrust prevailed once again, both for the failures suffered by the new Istanbul regime in Bulgaria, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Crete, and for the prevalence among the Young Turks of centralist and authoritarian tendencies destined to frustrate the aspirations of non-Turkish nationalities.

Further reasons of dissent were added by the emergence of projects aimed at establishing an Italian sphere of influence in the African *vilayets* of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. The idea dated back to the creation of the French protectorate over Tunisia in the aftermath of the Berlin Congress, but became more concrete after the failure of the expansionist attempts in eastern Africa and the defeat of Adowa in 1896. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the illusion that such a scheme could be implemented through a "peaceful penetration" in the economic field or through the creation of an "exclusive sphere of influence" tended to prevail, but with the passing of time the limits of such formulas became evident. Italian

[25] Archivio Storico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri [ASMAE], Collection of Telegrammes, vol. 286, Imperiali to Tittoni, July 25. 1908, tel. n. 2291/227.

[26] See for instance V. MANTEGAZZA, *La Turchia liberale e le Questioni Balcaniche*, Fratelli Trèves, Milan, 1908. Mantegazza, it is worth adding, was closely connected to the Italian economic circles active in the Ottoman Empire, being a member of the Società Commerciale d'Oriente.

[27] A. JACOVELLA, *Ettore Ferrari e i Giovani Turchi*, A. M. ISASTIA (ed.), *Il progetto liberal-democratico di Ettore Ferrari*, Franco Angeli, Milan, 1997, pp. 90-113.

businessmen and, above all, the Bank of Rome proved unable to impose their economic goals in a "free market" regime and needed preferential concessions in order to prevail upon their competitors from other European powers. Italian activism, however, unavoidably raised the diffidence and the opposition both of the Sublime Porte and of its local representatives. As the Ottoman minister in Rome observed on the eve of the Libyan War,

> the concessions that we could make to the Italians in our African provinces will do nothing but increase their appetite and offer them the occasion to intervene.[28]

And again

> Since there are no doubts anymore about the intentions of the Italians in Tripolitania, it is worth seriously considering that the increase in their economic interests in our African province will become the cause for further interventions …. Italian appetite is not satiable, and whatever concession or facilitation will be fatally destined to cause others. In this way, the sacrifices that we might undertake will have no outcome, but to represent temporary satisfactions, without lasting effects.[29]

Some Observations on the Libyan War

Arriving now at the Libyan War, it must be noted that in recent years the possibilities for study on this topic have increased substantially thanks to various publications that facilitated access to material spread throughout numerous archives. Such is the case of the volume of the *Documenti diplomatici italiani* concerning the period of 1911-1912,[30] of a new selection of the Giolitti Papers in great part focusing on the same years,[31]

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[28] *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents on the Origins of World War One*, V, *The Turco-Italian War 1911-1912*, edited by S. KUNERALP, The Isis Press, Istanbul, 2011, 2 vols. [ODD], I, d. 36, Seifeddin Bey to Rifaat Paşa, August 2. 1911.

[29] IBID., doc. 42, Seifeddin Bey to Rifaat Paşa, August 12. 1911.

[30] *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani* [DDI], Fourth Series: 1908-1914, vol. VII-VIII (30 March 1911 – 18 October 1912), Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, Rome 2004.

[31] *Giovanni Giolitti al governo, in Parlamento, nel carteggio*, ed. by A. A. MOLA, A. G. RICCI, Bastogi, Foggia, 2007-2010, 3 vols., vol. III, *Il carteggio*, 2 tomes [Giolitti, *Carteggio*]. This collection from the Giolitti Papers follows the previous *Quarant'anni di politica italiana. Dalle carte di Giovanni Giolitti*, ed. by C. PAVONE, Feltrinelli, Milan, 1962, 3 vols., but offers a much wider selection of documents, with special reference to the Libyan War.

and now also of a specific collection of Ottoman documents.[32] The subsequent picture does not offer ground-breaking revelations, but it does stimulate some considerations.

Without doubt, the above-mentioned documents confirm the political and military deficiencies with which Italy ventured into the conflict over Libya and the absurdity of the rhetorical constructions that served as its pretext. Nevertheless, Italian limitations appear at least partially alleviated if we choose as a term of comparison not the Great European Powers with centuries-long colonial experience, but the Ottoman antagonist. Indeed, this perspective provides a revealing picture. Ottoman diplomacy perceived with accuracy how the outbreak of the second Moroccan crisis in July 1908 would lead to an acceleration of the events in Italy and shape the possibility of a conflict for the control of the north African provinces. At the same time, the perception of the danger did not facilitate the seeking of solutions. The Ottoman representatives swayed between different hypotheses, each radically different from the other, suggesting at various points that defences be strengthened in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, that greater solidarity be achieved with the Arab population by improving the local administration,[33] that support should be solicited by parties interested in maintaining the status quo,[34] that international arbitration should be undertaken.[35] They even took into consideration a risky bluff such as threatening an aggression against the tiny but restless Kingdom of Montenegro: a scenario that, it was lightheartedly argued, would provoke Austro-Hungarian action in the Balkans and would distract the attention of the Italians from northern Africa (but that was much more likely to cause the outbreak of a general crisis and to put even more strain on the already weak Ottoman Empire).[36] In this atmosphere, the Ottoman ambassador in Paris asserted with pride that "it is the supreme moment in Turkey's existence. If she isn't able to assert herself with a proud and energetic approach that clearly displays her demand to be respected, she will become prey to the ambitions that are churning all around her";[37] his colleague in Rome, however, doubted "whether we could keep hold for enough time of an enemy that would cut by sea all our means of communication and supply".[38]

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[32] ODD, V.
[33] IBID., V, d. 39, Seifeddin Bey to Rifaat Paşa, August 9. 1911.
[34] IBID., d. 37, Seifeddin Bey to Rifaat Paşa, August 2. 1911.
[35] IBID., d. 24, Aristarchi Bey to Rifaat Paşa, June 16. 1911.
[36] IBID., d. 77, Seifeddin Bey to Hakki Paşa, September 12. 1911.
[37] IBID., d. 105, Rustem Bey to Hakki Paşa, September 22. 1911.
[38] IBID., d. 37.

With the outset of military operations, confusion grew in an exponential manner. Overall, the Ottoman representatives did not manage to go much beyond the perception of military weakness of the empire, of the isolation to which it was reduced in the international arena, and of national and religious tensions that were brewing internally. In the meantime, that which only improperly is often defined as the regime of the Young Turks remained characterised by profound divisions, with a worsening of rivalries between the group primarily tied to the Committee of Union and Progress and the men who remained loyal to the traditional system of Ottoman power and to the Sultan Mehmed V. These internal tensions were concretely demonstrated by the alternating at the head of the Ottoman government of three grand viziers and their respective foreign ministers over the months in which the conflict played out: first İbrahim Hakkı Paşa with Rıfat Paşa, then Saıt Paşa with Asım Bey, finally Ahmet Muhtar Paşa with Gabriel Efendi Noradungiyan.[39] Under these circumstances, the initiatives undertaken by Ottoman diplomacy maintained a decidedly unrealistic character: such was the case of the reports of Italian war crimes in order to awaken western public opinion, of the requests aimed at obtaining a mediation by one or more European powers or the summoning of an international conference, and of the anxious search for secure and trustworthy alliances that, in actuality, no one was willing to negotiate. Perhaps the most symptomatic demonstration of this weakness was the project, conceived of by foreign minister Asım Bey at the end of 1911, to offer an agreement to England at whatever condition, including the resignation of the grand vizir Saıt Pasa himself and the inclusion within the government of the men most agreeable to London: a project probably without many precedents throughout the annals of diplomacy, particularly since the British had not formulated any demands of that kind and were not interested in an alliance that would fatally endanger their relations with Italy.[40]

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[39] For Ottoman internal policy in this period and for the role of the Young Turks, see the classic works by F. AHMAD, *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics, 1908-1914*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1969; E. ZÜRCHER, *The Unionist Factor*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1984; M. Ş. HANIOĞLU, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2001. See also the synthesis by HANIOĞLU, *The Second Constitutional Period, 1908-1918*, *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. IV: *Turkey in the Modern World*, ed. by R. KASABA, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2008, pp. 62-111.

[40] ODD, V, I, d. 803, Assim Bey to Tevfik Paşa, November 28. 1911. According to the Ottoman foreign minister, "we will be glad to withdraw from power, confident

The above mentioned elements help to understand why for the Italians the most serious obstacle to a successful conclusion of the conflict was not represented by the Ottoman political and military initiatives and not even by the Arab resistance (which could not prevent the achievement of a negotiated solution, as the Treaty of Lausanne was eventually to demonstrate). Instead, the real problem was rooted in the limitations imposed upon the possibility to expand the conflict from Tripolitania and Cyrenaica to other areas, in order to reveal the fragility of the Ottoman Empire and to convince its leadership that there was no purpose in prolonging the war. Such limitations derived not only from the concerns raised among the other great powers by the perspective of a substantial expansion of the crisis, but also from Italy's awareness of her inability to adequately defend her interests when faced with an overall reawakening of the Eastern Question, particularly as her energies were absorbed in northern Africa.[41]

Indeed, the extension of the conflict was the veritable problem Italy faced between 1911 and 1912. The line of conduct followed by Rome was not devoid of contradictory aspects, but eventually turned out to be effective enough. With the exception of the initial attacks against the Turkish naval bases located on the eastern shore of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas (S. Giovanni di Medua, Preveza), Italy carefully avoided an expansion of military operations in the Balkan peninsula. Similarly, she did not take into consideration the invitations coming from almost all of the small powers in the region in order to support an overall anti-Ottoman uprising. Giolitti and his foreign minister Di San Giuliano were fully aware that any initiative of that kind would provide a pretext to their ally-rival Austria-Hungary to intervene. In the best case, this intervention would set the stage for a change in the Balkan status quo, which would leave Italy no further gains, apart from the conquest of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. In the worst case, it would open the way for a general crisis, something which nobody in Rome wished. Even though throughout the entire duration of the war in Istanbul and Vienna rumours kept circulating about alleged Italian designs or plots on the other shore of the Adriatic, the situation was rather different. Di San Giuliano was sincere when he

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that, in leaving the government to statesmen more welcome to the [London] government, we would carry out a patriotic duty". For the decision to abandon this initiative, IBID., d. 837, Tevfik Paşa to Assim Bey, November 30. 1911.

[41] In this sense see the considerations already developed in F. CACCAMO, *The Balkan Wars in the Italian Perspective*, H. YAVUZ, I. BLUMI (eds.), *War and Nationalism. The Balkan Wars, 1912-1913, and Their Sociopolitical Implications*, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, 2013, pp. 230-48.

explained to the Austro-Hungarian ambassador in Rome that the only Italian interest in the Balkans was that "order and status quo be maintained" – although he would not exclude that, considering the great amount of adventurers and *gens sans aveu* trafficking in the East, some Italian citizens might act differently, "for sheer criminal sense or for political fanaticism".[42] In the same perspective, Giolitti categorically rejected the suggestions coming from the entrepreneur Giuseppe Volpi or from less influential agitators, aimed at supporting the Kingdom of Montenegro or at promoting an insurrection among the Malisori (or mountaineers) from northern Albania in order to weaken the Ottoman enemy. As the Italian premier explained, "in this moment a movement in Albania could create very serious damage for Italy".[43]

If Italy accepted to stay calm in the Balkan peninsula, her stance was fundamentally different in other parts of the Ottoman Empire, where instability was less likely to have general repercussions. Such was the case of the Red Sea and of the south-western part of the Arab peninsula. Here the Italians, acting from their bases in Eritrea, did not hesitate to encourage the attempts of emancipation by Sheikh Mohammed Al-Idrīsī in the Asir and the Imam Yahya of the Zeudi sect in southern Yemen. Giolitti himself took the lead, confirming the decisive role he had undertaken in the realm of foreign policy after the outbreak of the Libyan conflict. Already at the end of November 1911, the president of the council explained at length:

> The war we wage against Turkey is not a war of religion, but a war in defense of our dignity and for the protection of our compatriots or their interests. Nothing else. On the other hand, we do not want to inquire into the reasons that induced the Sheikh [Idris] and the Imam [Yahya] in rebelling, but we would consider one thing with pleasure: the substitution in Arabia of Arab governments and governors to Turkish misrule.[44]

One month later he summarised: "The revolt of the Arabs against the Turks would be for us of capital importance".[45]

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[42] *Österreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik von der Bosnischen Krise bis zum Kriegsausbruch 1914*, Österreichischer Bundesverlag für Unterricht, Wissenschaft und Kunst, Wien-Leipzig, 1930, vol. III, d. 3082, Mérey to Aerenthal, December 9. 1911. See also d.. 2964, November 21. 1911.

[43] G. GIOLITTI, *Carteggio*, II, d. 289, Giolitti to Panizzardi, February 8. 1912. For the requests raised by Volpi and others, d. 285, Volpi to Giolitti, January 26. 1912; d. 287, Facchinetti to Giolitti, February 6. 1912.

[44] IBID., d. 277, Giolitti to Cerrina-Feroni, November 28. 1911.

[45] IBID., d. 279, Giolitti to Rubiolo, December 27. 1911.

In other words, in the Arab peninsula Italy's role proved to be much less respectful of the status quo than in the Balkans. The rivalries between Idris and Yahya prevented the development of a wider action, but in any case the Italians established a cooperation with the sheikh of the Asir, striking the Turkish outposts on the Red Sea that could represent a threat for him and supplying him with weapons and financial means.[46] Meanwhile military operations extended to other parts of the Ottoman domains, with the bombing of Beirut, the naval expedition against the Dardanelles and the occupation of the Dodecanese. Although these initiatives were not militarily decisive, they reached the desired goal and made apparent what, up to that point, Istanbul had not dared to confess: the incapacity to protect the naval connections among the different parts of the empire and to guarantee the security of its coastal regions. Especially the occupation of the Dodecanese (an operation that was certainly eccentric compared to the heart of the Mediterranean, but that for this reason was acceptable to the other great powers) convinced the Ottoman authorities to agree to the opening of peace negotiations with the Italians in Switzerland. This did not imply a surrender without conditions. On the contrary, Istanbul still hoped to negotiate an agreement that would protect at least partially its interests in the African provinces. Soon afterwards, however, the opening of the hostilities in south-east Europe by the Balkan League had the effect of forcing the Porte to hurriedly step back and accept most of the Italian demands.[47]

Coming now to the peace negotiations and to their precedents, it must be noticed that perhaps for few other conflicts in the twentieth century direct contacts between the two contestants played such a prominent role. Also in this respect Italy was in a condition of clear superiority in comparison with her Ottoman counterpart. After the declaration of war, the latter remained without any observer in Rome, and had to rely on the indiscretions circulating in the other European capitals or on the reading of newspapers to be privy to the orientation of the Italian government or public opinion. On the contrary Italy, exploiting the system of the capitulations and the other limitations still weighing on Ottoman sovereignty, was able to maintain in Istanbul various representatives who

[46] The Italians inquired the feasibility of other initiatives as well. For instance in June 1912 the regent of the consulate in Cairo, Arrigo Tacoli, examined with an Ottoman officer of Albanian origins the possibility to cause an uprising in Hedjaz: DDI, IV, VII-VIII, d. 906, Tacoli to Di San Giuliano, June 26. 1912. For the decision not to follow this road, see d. 931, Grimani to Di San Giuliano, July 17. 1912.

[47] Such scenery is substantially confirmed by ODD, V.

represented a useful source of information: such as the first secretary of the Italian embassy Carlo Garbasso and the director of the Società Commerciale d'Oriente Bernardo Nogara, plus a series of confidants and informers. As if this were not enough, the Ottoman capital became the destination of some confidential missions, starting from the one accomplished by the already mentioned Volpi, chief executive of the Società Commerciale d'Oriente and by then enrolled in the unofficial diplomacy headed by Giolitti. These contacts efficiently paved the way to the Italo-Turkish negotiations in Switzerland, first, in July 1912, at a confidential level, then, from August, with an official delegation including, in addition to Volpi, the members of parliament Pietro Bertolini and Guido Fusinato.[48]

It is beyond the scope of this paper to draw an account of these multiple contacts and negotiations, but it is worth stressing at least one point: the extravagant confusion of interests existing between the Italians and their Ottoman interlocutors, despite the state of war. For example an authoritative exponent of the Committee of Union and Progress as the deputy speaker of the House of Representatives and former minister for public works Halagiyan Efendi resulted strongly tied to the Società Commerciale d'Oriente, "having received with his family beyond half a million for the Eraclea mines".[49] In order to not to leave any doubt, Volpi explicitly described him as "one of those who work for us".[50] The position of the foreign minister Gabriel Efendi seemed similar, since he also had collaborated with the Società Commerciale d'Oriente and was, according to Nogara, "not completely alien" to tips.[51] Obviously, such connections could cause paradoxical situations. For instance, at the moment of the opening of the official peace negotiations in Switzerland, Nogara anticipated to Giolitti the following request from the Ottoman authorities: "They let me understand that the delegation that will be sent there will cost. I leave you the deductions".[52] In other words, the Istanbul government did not hesitate to ask the Italian enemy support in order to finance the envoy of its own representatives to Switzerland – or, at least, used this envoy as a pretext to obtain a bribe.

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[48] For an accurate reconstruction of the Italian-Ottoman peace negotiations, T. W. CHILDS, *Italo-Turkish Diplomacy*, pp. 160-230. The documents reproduced in G. GIOLITTI, *Carteggio*, remain in any case very useful.
[49] G. GIOLITTI, *Carteggio*, II, d. 312, Volpi to Giolitti, April 8. 1912.
[50] IBID., d. 321, Volpi to Giolitti, May 18. 1912.
[51] IBID., d. 338, Fusinato to Giolitti, July 26. 1912.
[52] DDI, IV, VII-VIII, d. 953, Nogara to Volpi, August 4. 1912.

Curious anecdotes aside, it was difficult that, under such circumstances, the Ottoman negotiators could seriously manage to operate exclusively for the good of their own country and avoid the pressures and the requests coming from the Italians. Volpi was well aware of this situation, providing a deeply disillusioned evaluation on the Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of his mission to Istanbul:

> It is a country that continues on a fateful road to the end, ruled by men, few of them honest, all, or almost, inferior to their task, but upon whom, unluckily, depends its destiny. Surely they are not free in the choice of the various roads that are open to them and of the enormous efforts that are ahead of them, both because of their being fatally compromised and for their level of morality, which is dubious in many instances, negative in the absolute majority.[53]

The opinion of Di San Giuliano himself was not that different. By then, the Italian foreign minister did not risk foreseeing more than "some years of life" for the empire, and only if it were able to adopt some form of decentralisation, "provided that it were moderately implemented".[54]

Under many aspects, for the Italians the end of the Libyan War meant a return to the point of departure. Once Tripolitania and Cyrenaica were obtained, the Italian ruling class and public opinion resumed their questioning on the policy to be adopted toward the Ottoman Empire. The terms of reference had not completely changed: the appreciation for the stabilising role that the empire could still play in delicate regions at the border between Europe and Asia was balanced by the support for the principle of nationality and by the search of an agreement with the small and medium Balkan powers; the projects to reach an agreement with Istanbul and to develop new economic initiatives in the eastern Mediterranean were faced with the reemergence of expansionist appetites, with the refusal to withdraw from the Dodecanese and the attempt to create a sphere of influence in southern Anatolia.[55] However, all of these contradictory impulses were dominated by a single Empire: the ever increasing scepticism toward the survival of the Ottoman element. This scepticism, already present in the reflections of the ideologues of the Risorgimento, would be further strengthened by the Balkan conflict of 1912-1913 and by World War One. Eventually, only the final dissolution

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[53] G. GIOLITTI, *Carteggio*, II, d. 325, Volpi to Giolitti, June 20. 1912.
[54] IBID., d. 387, Di San Giuliano to Giolitti, August 17. 1912.
[55] About this proposal, see M. PETRICIOLI, *L'Italia in Asia minore. Equilibrio mediterraneo e ambizioni imperialiste alla vigilia della Prima guerra mondiale*, Sansoni, Florence, 1983.

of the empire and, rising from its ashes, the birth of the new republican Turkey would determine a change in the Italian outlook.

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